



After the Arab Uprisings

Why were some, but not all the Arab mass social protests of 2011 accompanied by relatively quick and nonviolent outcomes in the direction of regime change, democracy, and social transformation? Why was a democratic transition limited to Tunisia, and why did region-wide democratization not occur? *After the Arab Uprisings* offers an explanatory framework to answer these central questions, based on four key themes: state and regime type, civil society, gender relations and women's mobilizations, and external influence. Applying these to seven cases - Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen - Valentine M. Moghadam and Shamiran Mako highlight the salience of domestic and external factors and forces, uniquely presenting women's legal status, social positions, and organizational capacity, along with the presence or absence of external intervention, as key elements in explaining the divergent outcomes of the Arab Spring uprisings, and extending the analysis to the present day.

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Progress and Stagnation in the Middle East
and North Africa

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We dedicate this book to all those who gave their lives, and to those who continue to strive, for progressive social change in the Middle East and North Africa.

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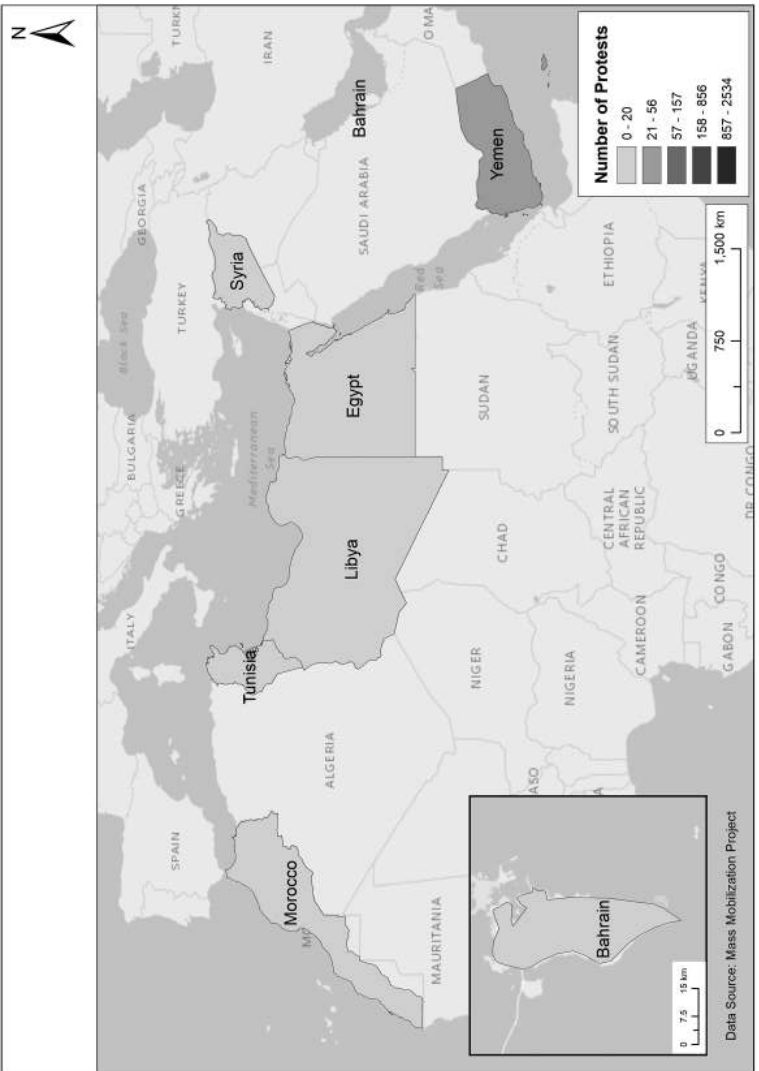
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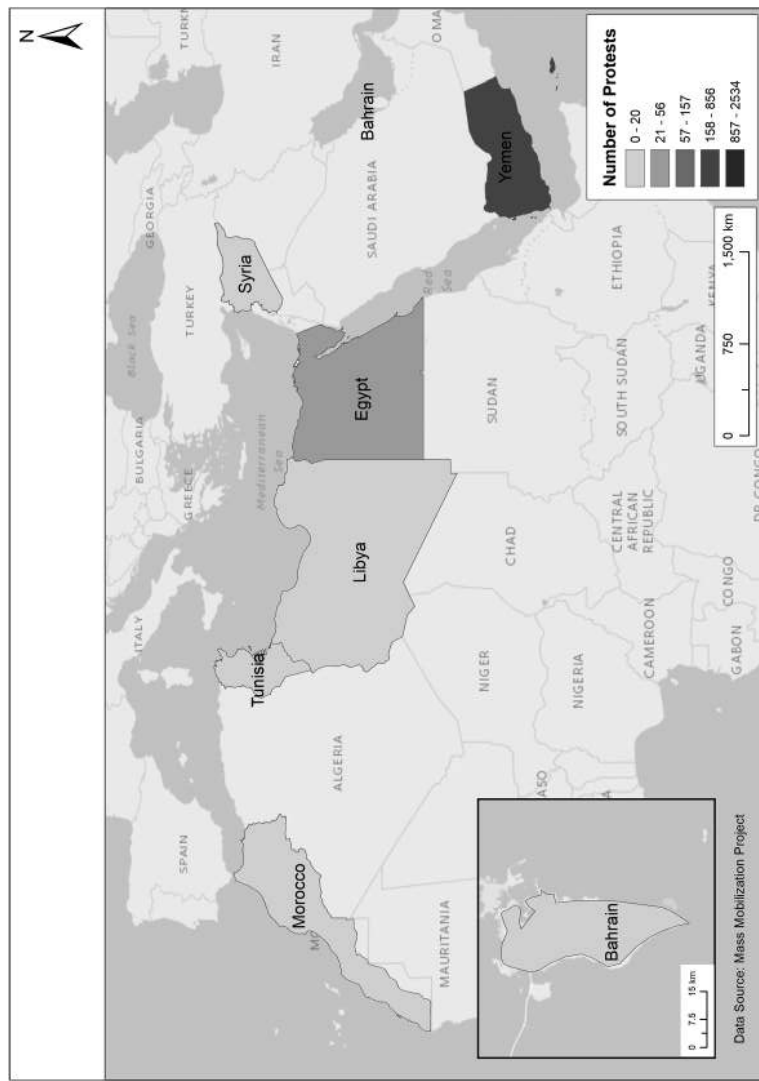
Abbreviations

ADFM	Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc
AFTURD	Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement
AHDR	Arab Human Development Reports
AMDH	Association Marocain des Droits Humains
ANC	Assemblée Nationale Constitutionnelle (Tunisie)
ATFD	Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN)
CNDH	Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme (Morocco)
COLIBE	Commission des libertés individuelles et de l'égalité (Tunisie)
CREDIF	Centre de recherches, d'études, de documentation et d'information sur la femme (Tunisia)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women (U.N.)
EEAS	European External Action Service
EMP	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (1995)
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy (2003)
ETUF	Egyptian Trade Union Federation
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
EU-LAS	EU-League of Arab States (2015)
ICT	Information and Computer Technology
IICI	Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (UN)
ILO	International Labour Organization (UN)
IMF	International Monetary Fund

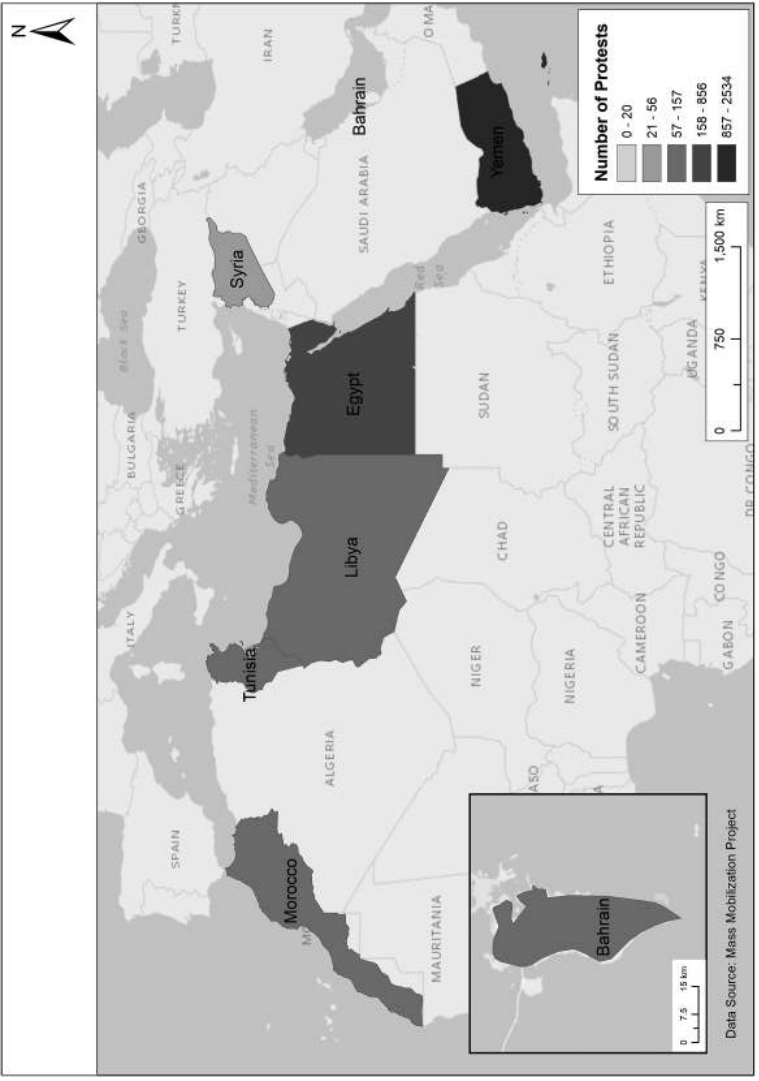
IS	Islamic State; the co-called Caliphate in Iraq and Syria 2015–19, also known by the acronyms ISIS and ISIL and the Arabic <i>Daesh</i> .
LTDH	Ligue Tunisienne pour les Droits Humains
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs (Egypt)
MP	Member of parliament
M20F	<i>Mouvement 20 février</i>
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPA	National Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development (Morocco)
NTC	National Transitional Council (Libya post-2011)
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (1967–1990)
R2P	Responsibility to Protect (U.N.)
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals (2015–30)
SRC	Security Council Resolution
TEU	Treaty of European Union (1992)
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAF	Union d'Action Féminine (Morocco)
UFM	Union for the Mediterranean (2008)
UGET	Union Générale des Etudiants Tunisiens
UGTT	Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNFT	Union Nationale des Femmes Tunisiennes
UNSMIL	UN Support Mission in Libya
USFP	Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1917–91)
UTICA	Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat
WB	World Bank
WSF	World Social Forum



Map 1 Total number of protests in the MENA region, 1990–2000



Map 2 Total number of protests in the MENA region, 2001–2010



Map 3 Total number of protests in the MENA region, 2011–2018

1 *Introduction and Overview*

The Arab uprisings that engulfed the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) produced domestic shocks to a regional state system known for its authoritarian durability and resistance to democracy. Beginning in Tunisia in late 2010 and quickly spreading to Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, the uprisings differed in degree and scope, resulting in divergent outcomes for the people and places of the region. As the uprisings grew, state responses varied significantly. Some regimes were overthrown following decades of rule while others acquiesced to citizen demands by engaging in various concession-making processes. Several states repressed the protest movements to sustain their hold on power, and Egypt's authoritarianism reemerged following regime change. Only Tunisia embarked on a procedural and consensual democratic transition that won international accolades and a 2015 Nobel Peace Prize for four civil society organizations called the National Dialogue Quartet.

Why were some but not all the mass social protests of 2011 accompanied by relatively quick and nonviolent outcomes in the direction of regime change, democracy, and social transformation? Why did Tunisia succeed but Egypt did not? Why did the Bahraini monarchy call on outside military assistance to repress the protests, while the Moroccan monarchy quickly agreed to constitutional amendments? Why did Libya, Syria, and Yemen descend into internationalized civil conflicts? More broadly, what are the prospects for democratization in the region? These are the principal questions posed and addressed in this book.

A burgeoning literature on the Arab Spring has illuminated dynamics and processes of change, and much of that literature has been informed by the larger scholarship on revolutions, social protests, and democratic transitions. Many studies have drawn attention to economic factors as well as political discontent: persistent unemployment and growing youth unemployment, the rising cost of living, and the income

and wealth disparities. They noted that the end of the “authoritarian bargain” – which during its heyday had enabled regimes to stay in power through the disbursement of social welfare – had now delegitimized those regimes, leading to calls for their downfall. Since 2012, over 200 books have been written on the subject, along with numerous scholarly articles. There has been much speculation and analysis of prospects for successful democratic transitions and consolidation; between 2011 and 2014, the *Journal of Democracy* devoted five issues and some forty-eight articles on the subject. *Mobilization*, an international quarterly that focuses on social protests and dynamics of social movements and revolutions, published a special issue in 2012 and many articles since then. Think tanks and research networks such as the Washington DC-based Brookings Institution and the Cairo-based Economic Forum for the Arab Countries, Iran and Turkey (ERF) have issued policy papers and other studies on political and economic causes and outcomes of the Arab Spring protests. The events of 2011 and since continue to attract scholarly attention and generate analyses that focus on one or another causal factor in the outbreak of the protests or the subsequent failed “revolutions.” Such analyses typically are differentiated by their grounding in the academic disciplines (economics, political science, sociology, history, etc.) and further grounding in diverse theoretical traditions (Marxism, development studies, realism, social movement studies, world-system analysis, feminist studies, world polity theory, etc.). Many studies prefer to focus on one or another of the Arab Spring country cases, with Tunisia and Egypt having generated arguably the lion’s share of studies. All have elucidated dynamics and processes and have contributed to a rich and still-growing literature on the Arab Spring. Our contribution engages with and builds on the plethora of scholarship that has emerged over the past decade, converging with but also diverging from existing explanations to add nuance to the puzzle of why the Arab Spring protests resulted in such varied outcomes and did not generate a region-wide democratic transition.

In this book, we approach the subject matter differently, given that only a few studies – notably, the 2015 study by Brownlee et al. – have offered a multilevel and cross-national analysis of divergent outcomes.¹ Even so, our approach differs, as we account for internal and external

¹ Brownlee et al. (2013, 2015). See also Lacroix and Filiu (2018).

factors and forces and bring gender relations and women's mobilizations into the analysis. In our book, we develop an explanatory framework for the varied outcomes and compare two sets of cases. The first consists of Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco, which experienced regime change (Tunisia and Egypt) and/or constitutional change (Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco) accompanied by democratic procedures. The second group of countries consists of Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, wherein the 2011 protests failed to bring about reforms or were repressed or descended into civil wars.² The first set of cases is subjected to a further analysis to account for Egypt's more turbulent transition and authoritarian reversal. We isolate four variables as endogenous and exogenous factors and forces – state and political institutions, civil society, gender relations and women's mobilizations, and international influences (both coercive and noncoercive) – to contextualize and explain the processes underpinning the protests and subsequent developments. Four chapters focus on those variables, preceded by a chapter on democracy to elucidate theoretical approaches, highlight the historical record on democratic transitions, help explain why – given our four explanatory variables – a democratic transition was elusive to all but Tunisia, and suggest lessons from the Arab Spring for studies of democracy.

In the next section, we begin with a review of the Arab Spring literature, followed by a presentation of our conceptual framework, methodology, and sources of data. This introductory chapter ends with a brief overview of each chapter.

Literature and Theory

The Arab Spring generated a flurry of analyses, by longstanding experts and newcomers alike, inspiring researchers to investigate a variety of historical, structural, and institutional explanatory factors. Early on, the “surprising” nature of the uprisings and the regime changes preoccupied some observers. Similar sentiments had been uttered about the 1989 uprisings in East-Central Europe.³ Some scholars may have

² We exclude Algeria as it lacked a cohesive, persistent, and consolidated protest movement, at least until the dramatic protests of early 2019. We return to Algeria in the chapter on democratization, Chapter 2. On Algeria, see Daoud (2015); Volpi (2013).

³ See Bunce (2009).

been surprised because of assumptions about the intractable role of culture or Islam or authoritarianism, as Çavdar and Yasar have noted.⁴ And yet, MENA scholars had long examined protest movements and cycles in the region, focusing on labor, students, feminists, Islamists, and liberals. After all, countries located at the periphery or semi-periphery of the modern world-system, affected by the global political economy and the interstate system in various ways, have long engaged in diverse forms of contentious politics. (See Table 1.1 for a summary of key developments in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.) As illustrated in Figures 1.1 and 1.2, citizens across the MENA region have a long and enduring history of social and political mobilization against well entrenched autocratic regimes, which should challenge assumptions about the uniqueness or surprising nature of the uprisings.⁵ Nor should the contagion effect of the uprisings be surprising. Prior research has found that revolutions and prodemocracy movements and transitions often have occurred in regional clusters (see Table 1.1 and Chapter 2).

In addition to the anti-IMF protests of the 1980s, more recent protests and popular mobilizations included Egypt's 2005 Kefaya movement, Iran's 2009 Green Protests, waves of feminist mobilization since the 1980s, and the 2006–08 workers' protests in Tunisia and Egypt. In a book completed just before the uprisings, Tunisian political economist Mahmoud Ben Romdhane took exception to studies on Tunisia's presumed authoritarian robustness by examining two earlier periods of democratic opening and contestation. In another book appearing shortly before the uprisings, Joel Beinin wrote of the history of worker action in Egypt. A decade earlier, Larbi Sadiki had examined the 1980's bread riots in Algeria, Jordan, and elsewhere, showing the link between mass agitation and political reforms, along with the effects of the global diffusion of democracy and human rights and internal crises of economic performance and legitimacy. In suggesting a historical pattern to Arab uprisings – or what the social movement literature calls cycles or repertoires of collective action – Sadiki's study anticipated the mass social protests of 2011 just as Ben Romdhane's questioned the authoritarian durability thesis for Tunisia.⁶

⁴ Çavdar and Yasar (2014) critique both “culturalist” studies and “formalism” in political science approaches to the MENA region.

⁵ Tripp (2013). ⁶ Beinin (2010); Ben Romdhane (2011); Sadiki (2000).

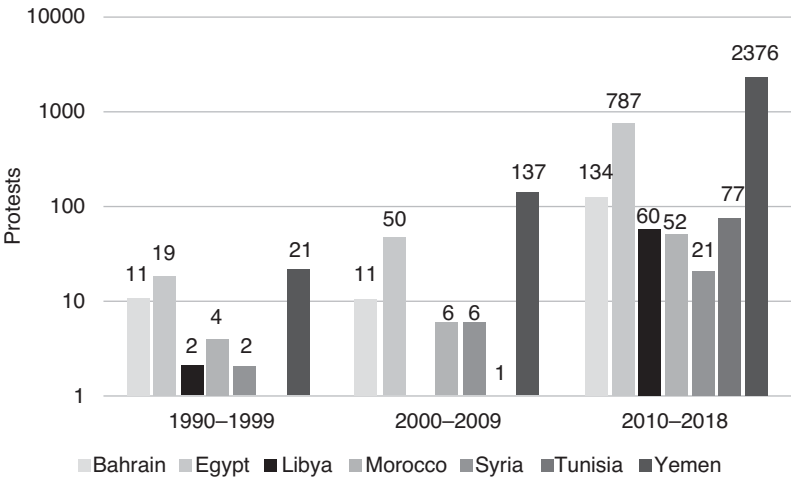


Figure 1.1 Protest and mobilization in MENA, 1990–2018.
Source: Mass Mobilization Project.

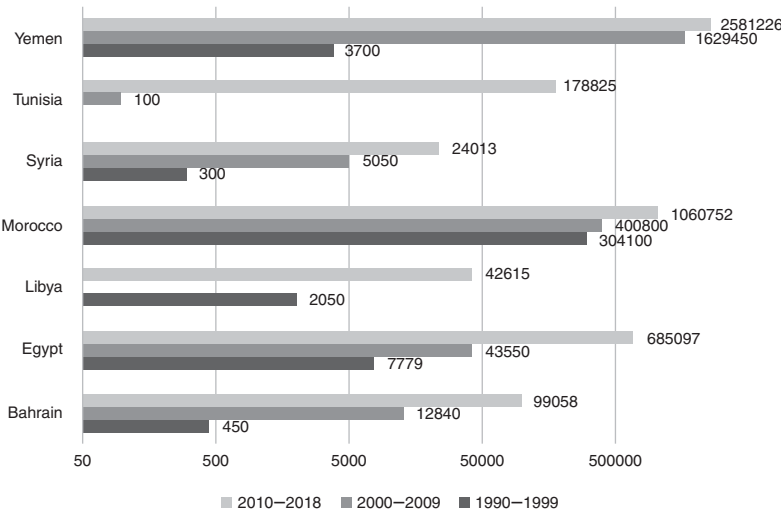


Figure 1.2 Total protest participants by country and decade.
Source: Mass Mobilization Project.

With that historical record in mind, Andrea Khalil’s book on the diverse “crowds” in Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya looked back at preceding protests. Other studies similarly situated the 2011 protest

Table 1.1 *Contentious politics, political economy, and diffusion: MENA in global perspective*

Years	Major international events	MENA specificities
Post-WWI	Bolshevik Revolution; defeat and break-up of Austro-Hungarian Empire and Ottoman Empires; 1919 anti-British uprising in Egypt; founding of Turkish Republic; nationalist movements spread; fascism in Europe	Modernization, constitutionalism, and state-building in Iran, Egypt, Turkey; British and French “mandates” in Arab region
Post-WWII	Independence movements, decolonization, nationalizations; UN Declaration on Human Rights; start of Cold War; 1956 Suez Crisis	Arab League formed 1945; new states: Israel 1948, Tunisia and Morocco 1956, Bahrain 1971, Yemen 1962 (North), 1967 (South); “revolutions” in Egypt and Syria; 1953 US/UK-aided coup in Iran
1960s–1970s	OPEC 1961; “Third Worldism”; expansion of left-wing movements; 1968 student uprisings; 1967 Arab-Israeli War; Palestine liberation movement; First UN world conference on women; “third-wave” democratic transitions: Greece, Portugal, Spain; international conventions spread	“Arab socialism”: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, southern Yemen; Jan. 1977 “bread riots” in Egypt; 1977 Egypt-Israel peace treaty; 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran
1980s	Structural adjustment programs; anti-IMF riots; USSR bogged down in US-supported Islamist uprising in Afghanistan; Second UN world conference on women; democratic transitions in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and in South Korea and the Philippines	Islamist movements spread; Iran-Iraq War; first Palestinian Intifada; “bread riots” in Morocco and Tunisia; new feminist movements emerge

1990s	Collapse of USSR; Iraq invades Kuwait, is defeated by int'l forces and suffers UN sanctions; democratic transitions in Eastern Europe and South Africa; EU expansion; Balkan Wars; Rwanda genocide; democracy promotion; third UN world conference on women, and UN world conferences 1993, 1994, 1995; consolidation of neoliberal capitalist globalization; NATO expansion	Unification of North and South Yemen; "Cairo Declaration on Human Rights"; limited political liberalization in MENA; slow process of economic liberalization; Oslo agreement on Israel-Palestine; Islamists vs state in Algerian civil conflict; CSOs and NGOs abound; al-Qaeda emerges
2000–10	9/11 attacks in US; "War on Terror"; US/UK invasion and occupation of Iraq; World Social Forum; 2008 financial crash and Great Recession	Arab Human Development Reports; Egypt's Kefaya movement; Iran's Green Protests; labor protests Tunisia and Egypt
2011–15	Arab Spring protests; Western powers declare "Qaddafi must go," "Assad must go"; Occupy Wall Street; anti-austerity protests in Europe; student protests in Chile; growth of right-wing populist-nationalist movements, parties, governments across Europe	Regime change Tunisia, Egypt, Libya; constitutional reforms Morocco; Saudi-UAE intervention Bahrain; failed state in Libya; military coup Egypt 2013; internationalized civil conflict Syria, 2012–19; ISIS "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria 2015–19; civil conflict Yemen 2012, Saudi assault 2015–20
2019–20	Brexit; Trump administration; right-wing populist-nationalism governs in US, Israel, India, the Philippines, Brazil, Turkey, Hungary, Poland; COVID-19 spreads across the globe	Defeat of ISIS "caliphate"; anti-government protests in Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan; Turkish invasion of Kurdish-held northeast Syria territory (Rojava); renewed protests in Lebanon in aftermath of Beirut port explosion August 2020

movements along a historical continuum of social movements reflecting political contestation across the MENA region.⁷ In describing the circumstances leading up the revolts, Marc Lynch challenged those espousing the “novelty” of the 2011 uprisings by emphasizing preceding patterns of popular mobilizations around economic and political issues, noting that “the idea that some cultural peculiarities rendered Arabs politically passive has always been at odds with reality.”⁸ Indeed, several authors have argued that the Arab Spring protests refute notions of the region’s “exceptionalism,” especially in connection with regime resilience and the presumed absence of prodemocracy movements. Several studies emerged to compare the Arab Spring with what Huntington had termed “the third wave of democratization”; or they suggested that the Arab Spring protests belonged to a proposed “fourth wave of democratization,” which included other prodemocracy movements in the new century. Greshman drew parallels between contemporary democratic transitions and previous ones in Southern and Central Europe, Latin America, and Southeast Asia.⁹ (See Chapter 2 for details.)

Several studies have emphasized the role of new actors and social media in shaping transition outcomes.¹⁰ Farhad Khosrokhavar summarizes protesters’ demands and the movements that accompanied them, identifying the “new social actors” as youth, women, the middle class, and citizen journalists. Joel Beinin identifies three preexisting “parallel Egyptian social movements” that undergirded the 2011 protests: the workers movement, the oppositional urban middle class, and the youth movement. Maha Abdelrahman refers to loosely-organized “prodemocracy” networks of students, political activists, youth, and professionals operating outside of formal institutions, as well as the more spontaneous and “dispersed” “pro-citizenship” protests by marginalized citizens that swept Egyptian streets. Vincent Durac lists a range of Egyptian protesters, mostly youth groups of various civil society movements or political parties. Beissinger et al. find that

⁷ Khalil (2014a); see also Moghadam (2013b); Tripp (2013).

⁸ Lynch (2012): 64.

⁹ Greshman (2011); Huntington (1991). See also Hale (2013), who warns against drawing overarching conclusions and generalizations about the outcomes of the uprisings due to different cascading effects at critical junctures.

¹⁰ On social media, see Howard and Hussain (2013); Khondker (2011); Mekouar (2016).

participants in Egypt were mostly middle class, middle-aged, and professional. In Tunisia the composition was more diverse, with workers, students, and the unemployed; the Tunisian revolution, they write, represented more of a cross-class uprising than was the case in Egypt. Nonetheless, Tunisia might be alone in the important role of workers, organized by the country's major trade union, the *Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens* (UGTT), and members of other civil society organizations such as the human rights league and the bar association – all of whom protested openly on the streets for the end of the Ben Ali regime. Diverse actors notwithstanding, Asef Bayat has argued that the Arab “revolutions” lacked “revolutionaries” – that is, a centralized movement with leadership and ideology, in contrast to the wave of twentieth-century Third World revolutions. In this he echoes Ghassan Salamé's earlier critical analysis of “democracy without democrats” at a time of limited political liberalization.¹¹

Despite the unprecedented mobilization of women in the Arab Spring, studies are largely divided into those written by feminist scholars who have emphasized women's roles and outcomes,¹² and the more mainstream scholarship that generally neglects or eschews such analysis. Even so, most feminist studies have focused more descriptively on women's participation in the protests and the impact on women's legal status and social positions of the different outcomes: repression, civil conflict, or Islamist electoral success. Few studies have systematically examined the role of gender relations and women's movements, and none as a causal factor in the different trajectories, as we do in this book.

Some studies written just after the protests sought to locate outcomes in the effects of regime typology and institutional configurations, including state capacity. Gelvin, for example, highlights the weakness of the Libyan and Yemeni states along with their tribal formations. In the aftermath of the US-led “War on Terror” and the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq, the US became more entrenched regionally, supporting authoritarian regimes and their security measures, and rallying its allies to increase spending on the military and security.

¹¹ Abdelrahman (2012); Bayat (2017); Beinin (2012); Beissinger et al. (2015); Durac (2015); Khosrokhavar (2012); Salamé (1994).

¹² See special issue of *Journal of North African Studies* (March 2014); see also Allam (2018); Hasso and Salime (2016); Khalil (2014a, 2014b); Salime (2012); Shalaby and Moghadam (2016); Singerman (2013); Stephan and Charrad (2020).

Yemen's government, for example, diverted resources – needed for social development in what was the poorest country in the region – toward the military. The war on terror increased the rift between state and society in specific countries while also adding to interstate tensions within the region. External support for ruling autocrats through military sales, along with the patronage relations that prioritize securitization interests – such as those leveraged between Gulf States and the US and other Western states – have contributed to what Eva Bellin terms the problem of authoritarian robustness in the MENA region.¹³

Our explanatory framework places a premium on external interference, given the long history of Western involvement – both coercive and noncoercive – in the MENA region. Khosrokhavar's 2012 book similarly emphasizes the role of geopolitical actors such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the Western alliance in shaping the immediate outcomes. As it happens, Arab publics are cognizant of the overlarge role of outside forces in shaping domestic politics and policies. Although the domestic environment motivated most participants of the Arab Spring uprisings, Arab Barometer data show considerable antipathy toward external intervention. Foreign interference is cited by a majority of respondents as an obstacle to economic development and reform in the Arab world.¹⁴

Economic factors have been emphasized in the causes (if not the outcomes) of the 2011 protests. In particular, scholars of critical development studies have highlighted the effects of uneven development and neoliberalization on conflict eruption. In their separate writings, Marxist scholars Gilbert Achcar and Adam Hanieh explain the structural causes of the uprisings in terms of economic stagnation and legitimization crises related to elite fragmentation and the local effects of global economic restructuring. Achcar draws on Trotsky's notion of combined and uneven development to explain both economic and political "blockages" that, when combined with the Great Recession, erupted into mass social protests. Hanieh explores the impact of "lopsided capitalist development," the consequences of imperialism and neoliberalism on authoritarian durability, and economic stagnation; similarly, Charles Tripp views the 2011 uprisings as the climax of years of the adverse effects of, and popular resistance to, economic

¹³ Bellin (2012); Gelvin (2012); Yom and Gause (2012).

¹⁴ Beissinger et al. (2015).

restructuring. The edited volume by Haas and Lesch highlights the socioeconomic impact of neoliberal policies imposed on various states by multilateral agencies, including the effects of the spike in food prices.¹⁵ Beissinger et al. analyze the Arab Barometer survey results to show that economic grievances trumped other motivations among the majority of protest participants in both Egypt and Tunisia.¹⁶ We agree with these analyses and find socioeconomic difficulties and grievances to have triggered the 2011 protests – difficulties that were (and remain) tied to the dynamics of the global economy as well as the interstate system. We situate our country cases and the MENA region as a whole in a capitalist world-system and a world polity (or interstate system) that broadly shape the parameters of state capacity and societal processes.

To elaborate briefly on the broad global context in which the Arab uprisings occurred, changes in both the world economy and the interstate system since the 1980s had affected the region in profound ways. (See also Table 1.1.) The collapse of the USSR and the socialist bloc, along with the rise of the US as the sole hegemon able to impose its preferred economic model on the world, undermined both self-defined “Arab socialist” countries and the capacity of other MENA states to forge an independent economic and political strategy. In some countries, longstanding bans on communist parties were lifted as part of the move toward liberalization, but this was in the context of both the wreckage of the historic Left and a shift toward a neoliberal economic policy model that was being diffused across the globe. The now-legal communist parties, mostly with new names, were hardly poised to challenge governments on neoliberalization or authoritarianism. Nor would MENA states create a united front against US military intervention in the region, whether in the aftermath of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 or the 2003 US invasion and occupation of Iraq. Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia had seen worker protests in the 1970s and

¹⁵ Achcar (2013); Bayat (2013); Ben Romdhane (2011); Hanieh (2013); Moghadam (2013b); Sadiki (2000); Springborg (2011).

¹⁶ Beissinger et al. (2015) highlight Arab Barometer data showing that economic grievances trumped other motivations among the majority of those who participated in Egypt (67%) and Tunisia (77%). But for Tunisia, the demand for civil and political freedom was also important (50% of respondents), whereas for Egyptians it was supported by just 29% (see their table 1, p. 4). Several studies also have drawn attention to the role of environmental degradation as a precipitating factor; see, for example, Johnstone and Mazo (2011).

early 1980s when structural adjustment policies were adopted and some leftists later joined the anti-/alter-globalization movement that emerged in the new century. But for the most part, the 1990s and the start of the new century were characterized by deradicalization (other than the growing Islamist movements), giving rise to the many studies on authoritarian robustness, lack of democratization, and Arab exceptionalism to other regional trends. MENA countries may have been largely unaffected by the financial crisis of the late 1990s and early 2000s that hit Russia and certain countries in Latin America and Southeast Asia, but several were hit by rising food costs and unemployment, and labor protests in Egypt and Tunisia. The 2008 financial crisis and ensuing Global Recession produced loss of European investments and thus jobs, coupled with increases in the cost of living. Shortly thereafter, the Arab Spring protests erupted.

At a regional and country level of analysis, Brownlee et al. attribute two preexisting and complementary structural variables to explain divergent outcomes of the Arab uprisings that swept the region from 2010–12 – namely, the continued presence of oil wealth and hereditary succession or dynasticism. Specifically, the presence or absence of the two variables and their level of institutionalization in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Libya, and Bahrain determined the trajectory of the success or failure of oppositional forces and the variation in the governments' responses to protesters. In seeking a parsimonious explanation of divergence, the authors acknowledge the absence of oil rents in cases like Syria and explain the persistence of the Assad regime to hereditary rule that produces strong ties between the regime and the state's coercive apparatus. They argue that the Qaddafi regime in oil-rich Libya would have been durable but for international intervention, and that the GCC intervention in Bahrain sustained the hereditary ruling Sunni Khalifa family.¹⁷ Although a component of our analysis overlaps with the Brownlee et al. analysis, our framework differs by accounting for four variables that span both structural and societal, and internal and external, factors and forces. By infusing these dimensions in our explanatory framework, we are able to situate the uprisings' trajectories along a temporal and contextual setting and thus reframe the complex web of interactions that produced the divergent

¹⁷ Brownlee et al. (2013, 2015). See also Lacroix and Filiu (2018).

outcomes. This method also enables us to underscore the processes and causal mechanisms that shaped transition successes and failures.

Conceptual Framework: Modeling Divergent Outcomes

Our book seeks to answer a central question: Why were some but not all the regional mass social protests of early 2011 accompanied by nonviolent and procedural outcomes in the direction of regime change and democratic reforms? And what explains the divergent outcomes? Taking on Gregory Gause's challenge to reconsider preexisting explanations, we develop an explanatory framework for the varied outcomes and compare two sets of cases – Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco, and Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. The first set of cases is subjected to a further comparative analysis to account for Egypt's more turbulent transition and authoritarian reversal. With previous research on revolutions and "third wave" democratic transitions as a backdrop, we isolate four variables constituting endogenous and exogenous factors and forces – state and political institutions, civil society, gender relations and women's mobilizations, and international influences – to contextualize and explain the processes underpinning the protests and subsequent developments across the seven regional case studies. We focus on the impact and interaction of four variables on the Arab Spring trajectories, conceptualized as follows:

State and political institutions is defined here as the type of political system, state ideology, and institutions, including the role and power of the military, state capacity, and center-periphery relations. All the states covered in this book had been affected by colonialism, both Ottoman and European, whether in terms of geographies and borders or political institutions and legal frameworks. In the post-WW II period of state-building, social and economic development took place in a global context of "three worlds" that gave newly-independent countries more room for maneuver, but within limits defined by their location in the periphery of the capitalist world-system. All the Arab Spring cases were characterized by the presence of authoritarian polities that broached no dissent and harassed or imprisoned opponents. However, variations of authoritarian rule and political institutions could be identified: monarchical (Bahrain, Morocco); personalist or neopatriarchal (Libya, Syria); secular and modernizing (Tunisia); military (Egypt), tribal-Islamic (Yemen). In some cases, political parties were

present whereas in others, a single party ruled. From a gender perspective, all the states could be termed patriarchal-authoritarian or – drawing on the work of Hisham Sharabi, “neopatriarchal.”¹⁸ For the MENA region as a whole, the neopatriarchal state could be seen as constituting a continuum from the West-friendly, secular republican and pro-women’s rights authoritarian state of Tunisia at one end, to the premodern (and prefeminist) form of rule in Saudi Arabia, at the other, with its very large and colossally rich royal family, powerful Sunni religious authorities, strict controls over women’s dress and mobility, and absence of a modern civil society. Between those two poles, political institutions and associational life varied. The Syrian state defined itself as secular and nonsectarian but did not allow for the development of political parties or independent civil society organizations. In the early 1990s, the Moroccan state began to allow some civil society and political society development, enabling the expansion of women’s rights organizations; this accelerated after the November 1997 electoral victory of the *Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires* (USFP), which had a progressive agenda, although the monarchy retained vast powers. The institutional legacy of the “*ancien régime*” is salient; whether understood in terms of laws and norms or of the nature and quality of governmental bodies, institutions were arguably most established and developed in Tunisia than elsewhere, and the military played a far lesser role there than in Egypt and Syria.

As Max Weber famously noted in his 1918 essay “Politics as a Vocation,” a modern state has the (legitimate) monopoly on the means of violence. The repressive elements of the state apparatus are deployed almost without hesitation when the state – democratic and nondemocratic alike – is challenged. Charles Tilly pointed out that repression raises the costs to protesters,¹⁹ but others have argued that repression can spur a backlash. How this played out in our seven country case studies is explored in Chapter 3, but here we note some patterns. The use of some repression in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011 only galvanized the opposition. Repression was avoided in Morocco through state concessions to the 20 February Movement. Repression succeeded in Bahrain, aided by Saudi military involvement. Repression

¹⁸ Sharabi (1988). On the neopatriarchal state, see Moghadam (1993, 1998b), and Chapter 4 of this book.

¹⁹ Tilly (1978); Weber (2015 [1918]): 128–98.

of the opposition in Libya and Syria was accompanied by external military involvement, though not “with permission,” as in Bahrain’s case. Of all our country cases, Tunisia had the lowest military spending, and arguably the most developed political institutions.

Civil society growth and capacity refers to the presence, relative strength, and autonomy of civil society organizations (CSOs) such as trade unions, feminist groups, human rights groups, and professional associations, as well as the presence and influence of religious bodies. The early 1990s saw a proliferating literature on civil society in MENA and the spread of many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but little to no comparative studies. As Altan-Olcay and Icduygu cogently argue, understanding the link between civil society and democratization requires case-by-case analysis but also comparing different patterns of political regulation and control, resource inequalities, and relations with larger grassroots mobilization.²⁰ Since the 1980s, what had developed in Egypt – unlike Tunisia or Morocco – was a gradual Islamization of civil society, with a vast network of religious networks, associations, charities, and professional organizations largely controlled by Muslim Brotherhood (MB) supporters. Those organizations became mobilizing structures in the immediate aftermath of Mubarak’s downfall and during preparations for new elections. In Yemen, too, Islamic charities and associations prevailed in the absence of a modern, secular civil society or political society. The strength of a modern civil society is also connected to the strength of modern social classes, including workers organized in independent trade unions.²¹ Civil society and the social movements that may arise from it – or may create it – are regarded as essential components of democracy. We expect that the Arab societies that had experienced relatively more growth and capacity of modern associational life would have a smoother transition toward democratization.

Gender relations and women’s mobilizations refers to women’s legal status and social positions; their visibility, influence, and presence in the public sphere and public space; the presence or absence of pro-women policies and programs; and the nature of family law (patriarchal or relatively liberal). Gender relations and women’s mobilizations are

²⁰ Altan-Olcay and Icduygu (2012).

²¹ Dahlum et al. (2019) studied a century of mass protests across 150 countries and found that the success of mass protests depends on who is doing the protesting; in particular, the presence of an organized working class is a key component.

important in at least three ways. First, research by Caprioli, Hudson, and others has shown that patriarchy and gender inequality are positively associated with both intra- and interstate conflict. In other words, we can expect less violent conflict when women have a strong presence in civil society and in political society. Indeed, on the basis of a large number of well-cited publications conducted by its researchers, the WomanStats project finds that the degree of equality of women within countries is the best predictor – better than degree of democracy and better than level of wealth, income inequality, or ethno-religious identity – of how peaceful or conflict-ridden their countries are.²² A second reason for the significance of gender and women's mobilizations, as Htun and Weldon have demonstrated, is that women's autonomous organizing in civil society accounts for progressive social policies. This reality makes it more likely that a democratic transition and new political institutions will be more women-friendly. Third, as Moghadam has argued, women may or may not need democracy in order to flourish, but democracy without women is either partial or male-biased or – in some cases – impossible. In their recent empirical study, Wyndow and her colleagues show that women's empowerment since 1980 has been a causal factor in movements for democratic development.²³ On the basis of such research, as well as the prodigious feminist scholarship on women's movements and the state in the MENA region, we posit that on the eve of the Arab Spring uprisings, MENA women's rights movements were at diverse stages of development but strongest in Morocco and Tunisia, where gender indicators were also more positive (see Table 1.2 and Figure 1.3).

International connections and intervention refer to both noncoercive and coercive forms of influence. Positive and constructive forms of international engagement and connections may include ties to international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), international organizations (IOs), and multilateral bodies, along with rights-based treaty ratification. Such involvement in the world polity, along with nonexploitative forms of economic cooperation, is important for socioeconomic development and for peace and stability in the world order.

²² Caprioli (2000); Hudson (2010); see also WomanStats Project www.womanstats.org/. Democracies with higher levels of violence against women are less stable and more likely to choose force rather than diplomacy to resolve conflict.

²³ Htun and Weldon (2018); Wyndow et al. (2013).

Table 1.2 *Before the uprisings: comparative gender indicators 2010–11*

	School Enrollment, Tertiary, Female, % Gross, 2010	Mean age at first marriage (F, years)	Fertility rate	Female share, paid labor force	Female share, parliamentary seats (year suffrage won)	Female share of judges (year of first appointment)
Bahrain	46.5	26	2.3	10	3 (2002)	7 women (2006)
Egypt	31.8	23	2.9	19	2 (1956)	1% (2003)
Libya ¹	N/A		3	N/A	7.7 (1963, 1964)	50 women in 2010 (1989)
Morocco	13.5	26	2.4	21	10 (1959)	24% (1960)
Tunisia	43.4	27	1.9	25	28 (1959)	28% (1965)
Syria	24.0	25	3.3	16	12 (1949, 1953)	13% (2001)
Yemen	6.5	22	5.2	6	0 (1967, 1970)	0–1% (2006)

Source: Compiled from World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2010*; World Bank, *World Development Indicators*; UNDP Human Development Report 2012.

¹ Data for Libya was obtained from the World Bank, Libya, 2010: Data pertaining to women's suffrage in Libya vary with sources pointing to be both 1963 and 1964.

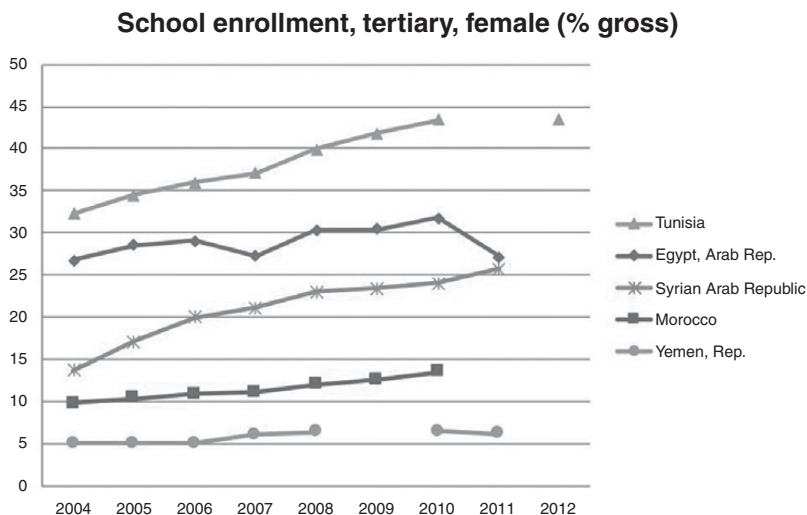


Figure 1.3 Women's tertiary enrollments, 2004–11.

Less positive, and often destructive, are external pressures on regimes and diplomatic and military intervention. As noted under *state and political institutions* above, despite the capacity of newly-independent Arab states to define their own path, Arab state sovereignty was still often compromised by their location in the periphery of the world-system, rendering them vulnerable to economic dependency as well as intervention by external powers. Cold War rivalry, the Suez Crisis of 1956, the Arab-Israeli wars that in part echoed rivalry between the two superpowers, US support of Iraq during its war with Iran (1980–8), US intervention in the first Gulf War (1990–1) and its growing regional military presence, and of course the highly consequential 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq – all these forms of external intervention changed the regional (and arguably global) dynamics in profound ways even before the Arab uprisings. Throughout, countries in the region tended to steadily increase their military spending, initially purchasing arms from the Soviet bloc countries as well as the USA but increasingly almost exclusively from the USA, France, and the UK.

Adherence to international law and to human rights norms is important for the world's stability as well as for the well-being of citizens. However, as Wallerstein and other world-systems scholars have

argued, the world-system's hegemon tends to be a law unto itself.²⁴ Çubukçu and others have pointed out that the Iraq War was an example not only of the failure of international law, but also of how the discourse of human rights was used by the USA and its allies as justification for invasion and occupation, despite the UN's objections.²⁵ A similar manipulation of human rights concerns was used during the Arab Spring protests, especially with respect to Libya and Syria.

Western powers have historically deployed noncoercive forms of influence, such as loans and foreign aid (both of which China has more recently adopted as diplomatic tools) and thus we distinguish such forms of external influence from the more coercive forms of interference, notably military intervention. We posit that militarism and military interventions have deleterious effects on our three other variables. Unwanted external military intervention can destabilize the state and its institutions, resulting in risks for vulnerable groups, religious minorities, and women. Such an outcome became apparent after the 2003 US/UK invasion of Iraq, and with the rise of the so-called Islamic State (IS/ISIS/ISIL/Daesh) in Iraq and Syria in 2015.

To return to Tilly's observation about repression, and depending on the context, unwanted external intervention can raise the stakes for a state's survival and lead to more repression (as in Syria). It also can derail a revolutionary process (as in Bahrain and Libya). Disruptive external intervention additionally creates a more "dangerous neighborhood" that compels peaceful states to increase military spending (as occurred in Tunisia after 2013). Whereas connections to world society and the world polity, including activist ties to transnational advocacy networks, are positive forms of international influences, hegemonic impositions can complicate internal dynamics, generate backlashes, and create obstacles to smooth democratic transitions. We conjecture that the "benign neglect" of Tunisia and Morocco on the part of external powers served those countries well, in that the prodemocracy movements and their aftermath were organic, generated and led internally. Our book proposes an argument of the Arab uprisings that underscores the importance of situating each state's political development along a temporal continuum to explicate the socio-structural and political conditions that produced the varied outcomes. As such, our

²⁴ Wallerstein (2003). ²⁵ Çubukçu (2018).

conceptual framework is both case-oriented and variable-oriented. We posit that the presence of strong political institutions, a well-developed civil society, an active women's movement and gender relations that are moving in a less patriarchal direction, and the absence of external military intervention work in combination to produce a fruitful democratic outcome; conversely, military intervention, we argue, always produces authoritarian reversal or civil conflict. Our analysis indicates that only Tunisia fulfilled those conditions and thus was able to proceed in a democratic direction. Morocco did as well, relative to the other cases, but to a lesser degree than Tunisia.

We situate our inquiry within the analytical frameworks of contentious politics (both social movements and revolutions), political sociology, comparative politics, and international relations. Our framework is also informed by research within both the mainstream and feminist literatures in political science and political sociology.²⁶ Following Tilly and Tarrow, we demonstrate that all the Arab Spring cases represent forms of contentious politics that involved interactions whereby actors made claims targeting governments on behalf of shared interests or identities.²⁷ The outcomes were shaped by socio-structural and institutional legacies, which we examine along with international factors to explain the divergent course and outcomes in each case and comparatively.

Our book's explanatory framework is distinctive in several ways. First, the four variables constitute an integrated theoretical framework and are constitutive of state-society relations but also of the given countries' place and location in the international system (or the hierarchical capitalist world-system) which also could help predict the likelihood for military intervention.²⁸ Second, ours is the first book to seriously deliberate the role of gender relations and the mobilization capacity of women's civil society organizations prior to and following the uprisings as an explanatory variable for gauging the course and outcomes of the uprisings. As noted, in the now-prodigious literature on the Arab Spring, gender relations and women's rights appear largely as outcomes of the protest movements (if they are considered seriously

²⁶ Hadenius and Teorell (2005); Huntington (1991); Przeworski et al. (2000); Viterna and Fallon (2008); Waylen (2007); Wejnert (2005); Welzel et al. (2003).

²⁷ Tilly and Tarrow (2015): 7.

²⁸ See Ayoob (1995); de Mesquita and Downs (2005); Fearon and Laitin (2004); Hedley (1988); Wallerstein (2014).

at all), not as part of an explanatory framework.²⁹ We find that the strength of women's movements and their prior capacity to effect legal and policy reforms affected the nature of the protests and the policies of new governments.

Third, our comparative analysis integrates elite-centric and movement-centric approaches, and it acknowledges the influence of both endogenous and exogenous factors and forces. It is attentive to both structure and agency, that is, constraints faced by actors as well as opportunities for action and change. Fourth, the book considers external intervention as a key variable for explaining the success or failure of protest movements across the Arab Spring country case studies. We find that regional and international intervention in support of, in opposition to, or to neutralize the regimes across the seven cases drastically altered protest trajectories. We posit that the cases that endured external military intervention experienced more violent transitions, culminating in either authoritarian survival – as in Syria and Bahrain – or civil war, state failure, and the expansion of terrorist groups, as occurred in the wake of the NATO-led intervention in Libya, the destabilization of Syria, and the Saudi-led attacks on Yemen. Lastly, we argue that prospects for democratization are highly dependent on the interaction of our four variables.

Methods and Data

Empirically, our book contributes to the academic study of democratization and contentious politics (revolution, uprisings, social movements) as well as to academic and policy debates on the origins and outcomes of the Arab Spring. Applying a historical perspective as well, we are attentive to conditions during the critical period of state formation and state-building under autocratic regimes, situating the transitional outcomes along a historical continuum of contentious politics and state-making in the MENA region. Our mixed methods include in-depth, comparative case study analysis and use of quantitative information. We draw on descriptive statistics from the World Bank, the Fragile States Index, the World Values Survey, the Arab Barometer, and gender indicators compiled from the World Bank and the World Economic Forum. This methodology enables us to trace each state's

²⁹ But see Moghadam (2018).

socioeconomic and political development prior to and after the uprisings in order to explain comparative progress and stagnation across the selected cases. Conceptually, this project uniquely considers gender and women's mobilization as a key explanatory variable for measuring outcomes and divergence. By factoring in endogenous and exogenous factors and forces, and accounting for both structure and agency, our explanatory framework builds on and moves beyond the extant literature's reliance on oil wealth, heredity succession, or the robustness of the coercive apparatus.

Using J.S. Mill's "method of difference," which requires "comparing instances in which the phenomenon does occur, with instances in other respect similar in which it does not,"³⁰ we contrast three cases of relatively nonviolent uprisings that led to either regime change or constitutional reforms (Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco) with four cases of violent uprisings that at this writing (2019–20) remain characterized by repression, civil strife, or failed states (Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Yemen). Within the first group, we contrast the stalled and polarized process in Egypt with the smoother transitions in Tunisia and Morocco. We agree with political science research positing variance in outcomes based on multicausality, context-conditionality, and endogeneity,³¹ but we would argue that the international factor is critical for our comparative analysis of the cases and variables. The presence of a modern state and strong political institutions, a well-developed civil society, an active women's movement and gender relations that are moving in a less patriarchal direction, and the absence of military intervention by external powers work in combination to produce a fruitful democratic outcome; military intervention always produces authoritarian reversal or civil conflict. As such, our comparative analysis integrates elite-centric and movement-centric approaches and macro- and meso-levels of analysis, and it acknowledges the influence of endogenous and exogenous factors and forces. The structural causes of the uprisings – economic stagnation and legitimation crises related to elite fragmentation and the localized effects of global economic restructuring, all of which, as noted above, have been well documented in the burgeoning literature on the Arab Spring – are assumed for all the cases.

³⁰ Mill (1858): 222. See also George and Bennett (2005): 153; also Nepstad (2011).

³¹ Franzese (2009): 30.

Our data are drawn largely from secondary sources as well as government data relevant to the variables underpinning our analysis. Our research also is informed by our own past and ongoing observations, interviews, and research in Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia.

Chapter Overview

Following this introductory chapter, we begin with a chapter on democracy to provide theoretical grounding and a comparative perspective, given our overriding question of why only Tunisia succeeded in democratization (and to a lesser degree, Morocco). Considering, too, that what transpired during the Arab Spring has been considered “revolutions”³² as well as prodemocracy social movements,³³ we review and summarize the vast literatures to provide an overview of the conditions that bring about prodemocracy movements, the prerequisites for democratization, and the circumstances under which democratic consolidation can occur. Some historical examples round out the chapter and give the reader insights into “third wave” and “fourth wave” democratic transitions. The chapter helps situate the Arab uprisings in the history of democratic transitions since the 1970s, to underscore similarities and differences in the global context, the type of transitions that occurred, and democracy deficits and reversals that have ensued. The MENA region is not exceptional in its democratizing travails, although the extent of external penetration arguably is.

Chapter 3 follows with an empirical discussion of the states, regime types, and political institutions across our seven cases. All our country cases were authoritarian, but there were differences in regime type, the development of modern political institutions, citizen participation and rights, and international connections. We build on the literature on transitions from authoritarian rule to illuminate how institutional and structural configurations of a given state prior to popular mobilization can shape prodemocracy pathways. We emphasize that state institutions in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia were more bureaucratically

³² Abdelrahman (2015); Bayat (2017); Dabashi (2012); Goldstone (2011a); Hanieh (2013); Khosrokhavar (2012); Sonay (2018).

³³ Beinin (2014); Beinin and Vairel (2013); Durac (2015); Gunning and Baron (2013).

robust and able to penetrate society in noncoercive ways than were their counterparts in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

In Chapter 4, we turn to our civil society variable, starting with a theoretical discussion of the nature of civil society in mature democracies as distinct from authoritarian contexts, and the conditions under which autonomous civil societies can emerge, challenge the state, and provide leadership in a post-authoritarian context. In MENA, civil society capacity is shaped by the nature of the state and the extent of repression, but it is also linked to the presence or absence of modern social classes, professional groups, social movements, and “modernizing women.”³⁴ Civil society development is a prerequisite for democratization and is in turn strengthened by democratic rules and norms.

Chapter 5 draws attention to the significance of gender and women’s mobilizations in civil society and democratization, as well as in the propensity of the state – and the prodemocracy movement – to use or to withhold violence and repression. We find that of our seven case studies, only in Morocco and Tunisia were there active, visible, vocal, and influential feminist organizations that reflected the growing presence of women in an array of professions and occupations and in the burgeoning public sphere. Although autonomous, the feminist organizations had developed close ties to both civil society partners and to allies in political parties and government agencies. As a result, they were able to take part in the protests, the transition, and the constitution-writing process in a way that enhanced women’s rights as well as citizen rights more broadly.

The focus of Chapter 6 is on coercive and noncoercive external influence. We demonstrate that external influence is both regional and international, and show how foreign aid (economic and military) and more direct interventions affected the trajectory of the uprisings. As they were spared direct military interventions, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia embarked on a more organic transitional path; however, all three countries have been highly reliant on foreign aid (both economic and military), and thus on Western support. We caveat Egypt’s transition by accounting for its 2013 reversal and argue that America’s influence on autocratic incumbents manifested by military aid and arms sales mollified backlash against the army in its toppling of the country’s democratically elected government. Coercive interventions in

³⁴ See Moghadam (1993, 2013b, 2018).

Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen drastically impeded the transitions and produced highly internationalized civil wars.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, presents our main findings and conclusions. We reiterate our argument concerning the salience of regime type, civil society, women's mobilizations, and external influence in shaping the conditions of possibility for democratization after the Arab Spring protests. We conclude that democracy is not a finished product but rather a political model, or variety of models, that demands citizen participation and vigilance, a responsive state, strong institutions, and a global environment conducive to sustained and effective democracies. Both the 2011 Arab Spring protests and the 2019 renewed protest wave confirm that democratic development remains unfinished business in the region, and that scholars of revolutions, social movements, and democracy, and of the state, society, and the international system have much to learn from the MENA experience.

2 *Pathways to Democratization: The Arab Spring in Comparative Perspective*

The Middle East and North Africa region has not been immune to forms of contentious politics – far from it. The region has experienced independence struggles, revolutions, labor protests, and demonstrations for women’s rights. Yet it has been regarded as a laggard in the democracy waves that Samuel Huntington theorized. The region was not, for example, part of democracy’s third wave, which enveloped Southern Europe, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and parts of Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa between the mid-1970s and 1990. Eva Bellin asked: “Why have the Middle East and North Africa remained so singularly resistant to democratization?” Michael Herb noted that among the Arab monarchies, all except Morocco lacked a strong party system. Just before the start of the Arab Spring protests, Larry Diamond wrote, “The continuing absence of even a single democratic regime in the Arab world is a striking anomaly – the principal exception to the globalization of democracy.” At around the same time, Asef Bayat argued that mass protests for political change were unlikely to occur, and thus analysis had to focus on variegated individual and localized forms of resistance.¹ Shortly thereafter, the region exploded in mass protests, with demands for political change and socioeconomic rights.

As noted, the immediate outcomes varied. Regime changes occurred in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, albeit in very different ways; Syria, Libya, and Yemen descended into varying degrees of violence and then internationalized civil conflict; and Bahrain’s Day of Rage was suppressed with Saudi military support. The Tahrir Square protests in Egypt raised expectations of significant sociopolitical transformation, and in 2011–12, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia appeared to be undergoing a democratic transition. However, by 2013 Egypt’s process had stalled and then reverted to a military-led authoritarianism, and in

¹ Bayat (2010); Bellin (2004): 139; Diamond (2010): 3; Herb (2005).

2019 was beset by renewed protests. Egypt's "failed transition," as Nathan Brown termed it, was characterized by an overly present military, multiple elections, and a fractured polity and civil society.² Of the countries that experienced uprisings, only Tunisia's political revolution launched a successful pathway to democratic consolidation, although it has struggled with economic difficulties, periodic strikes, and some political dysfunction. Morocco is, arguably, a special case of an unusually hybrid transition that began with the first *gouvernement d'alternance* in 1998, led by Prime Minister Yousoufi and his progressive cabinet. Its transition trajectory then featured the 20 February Movement in 2011 (*mouvement 20 février*), which was quickly followed by promised reforms, constitutional amendments, and a referendum. In 2019, Moroccan citizens were still protesting, mainly around unmet socioeconomic demands.

This book addresses several questions. What were the conditions that set off the Arab Spring protests? Why was Tunisia – and to a lesser extent, Morocco – the only country to proceed on the path of democratic transition? Why not Egypt? Why not Libya, despite the support of Western countries and NATO and early celebrations of Libya's purported dynamic civil society? What is the relationship between democratization, feminist movements, and types of gender systems? In what ways do the Arab uprisings and their divergent outcomes help refine existing theoretical perspectives?

Explanations for the Arab Spring causes, course, and consequences – as we noted in Chapter 1 – are not only varied but prolific, having generated studies spanning the fields of revolutions, social movements, and democratic transitions.³ Revolutions and social movements are forms of collective action, or contentious politics, that until recently were analyzed separately. The scholarship on revolution includes important studies on the French, Russian, and Chinese social revolutions, along with the array of twentieth-century Third World revolutions.⁴ The literature on social movements – which was initially

² See Brown (2013).

³ On the Arab Spring as revolution, see Bayat (2017); on social movements see Beinín and Vairel (2013); on democratic transitions, see Elbadawi and Makdisi (2017a, 2017b).

⁴ The scholarship on revolution is associated with works by Barrington Moore, Charles Tilly, Theda Skocpol, Jack Goldstone, Misagh Parsa, and John Foran, among others.

focused on the USA – has offered key concepts pertaining to political, organizational, and cultural resources; studies also have examined the role of emotions and transnational forms of organizing and diffusion.⁵ Theories and studies of democratic transitions, largely based on the experiences in Latin America and Eastern Europe, and highlighting the role of civil society, have produced notions of democracy waves, pre-conditions for democracy, and the sequencing and consolidation of democratic transitions.⁶ Finally, the world-system paradigm theorizes “anti-systemic movements” and “world revolutions,” with scholars taking a *longue durée* view of contentious politics that is tied to crises of accumulation or hegemony and transition to a new (as yet determined) world-system.⁷ Until recently, those bodies of literature rarely spoke to each other. The protests in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and political developments in the early 1990s generated analytical cross-fertilization, including a term, *refolution*, coined by Timothy Garton-Ash. Yet much of the scholarship on comparative democratization attributed little significance to non-domestic forces, or on the role of outside powers in preventing or undermining democratic transitions. At the same time, democracy is hardly a predictable or linear process, as evidenced by the recent rise of right-wing populisms even in advanced Western democracies; by democracy reversals in India, Brazil, the Philippines, and Turkey; and by the role of outside intervention in affecting, indeed derailing, the democratizing prospects of Arab uprisings. The Arab Spring protests and their outcomes have produced not only fruitful discussions and debates, but also more synthesis across the different fields of study. Moreover, the scholarship on prodemocracy movements, transitions, and consolidation must now take into account the sociopolitical, institutional, and international factors and forces that we emphasize in this book.

⁵ The scholarship on social movements includes studies by inter alia, Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, Sidney Tarrow, Verta Taylor, Suzanne Staggenborg, and James Jasper, largely on the USA; and Donatella della Porta and Jackie Smith (and many others) on the global justice movement and the World Social Forum.

⁶ On democracy and democratic transitions see studies by Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, Adam Przeworski, Samuel Huntington, Philippe Schmitter, and Valerie Bunce, among others.

⁷ Notable scholars of the capitalist world-system include Immanuel Wallerstein, Terrence Hopkins, Samir Amin, Terry Boswell, Christopher Chase-Dunn, Jennifer Bair, and Wilma Dunaway.

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the Arab uprisings in the broader literature and historical record on revolutions, social movements, and democratic transitions. We thus begin with a survey of the relevant scholarship and then provide examples of “third-wave” democratic transitions to uncover similarities and differences across cases. The survey and comparative perspective elucidate the salience of structural processes, including international political economy and international relations, in affecting the opportunity structure for revolutions and democratic transitions, while also underscoring the role of systemic and meso-level factors and forces that we highlight in this book: state and political institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), and women’s rights movements.

Preconditions of Democracy

For John Stuart Mill, democracy required a certain level of societal maturity. More recently, the modernization thesis on the role of economic development has shaped much scholarly thinking about the necessary conditions, or prerequisites, for democratization. Traditional approaches to democratization found a strong relationship between economic development and democracy, or between democratic development and the presence of a large middle class or an organized working class.⁸ Beginning with the early work of Seymour Martin Lipset, elements frequently cited for successful prodemocracy movements include income and literacy levels, democratic neighbors, democratic culture, civil society, and a free market-driven economy, with scholars emphasizing one or another of those elements. A democratic culture is an important precondition, and socialization contributes to the formation of characteristics important to democracy such as tolerance and cooperation. Inglehart and Norris used data from the third wave of the World Values Survey to establish a link between socioeconomic development and support for egalitarian gender roles in politics.⁹

⁸ Diamond (1992); Lipset (1959); Rueschemeyer et al. (1992).

⁹ Acemoglu et al. (2005, 2008) on education and income; Barro (1999) on education; Campante and Chor (2011) on education and unemployment; Lipset (1959) on economic development; Przeworski et al. (2000) on income and wealth; Welzel and Inglehart (2008) on economic development and democratic culture; Inglehart and Norris (2003) on gender and democracy.

A large literature associates rising educational attainment and income with demands for, and movements toward, democratization, but education may have two different effects, as Campante and Chor explain. In one, education facilitates cultural modernization, political participation, and democracy by increasing awareness of political issues, fostering the socialization needed for effective political activity, and generally increasing civic skills.¹⁰ In the other, the lack of economic opportunities for an increasingly educated populace can lead to dissatisfaction and instability. Weak economic conditions lead to grievances; James Davies famously posited that rising expectations associated with expansions in education, when left unmet, could spill over into political violence. Huntington similarly acknowledged that higher education in many developing countries often failed to provide skills relevant to the countries' needs, churning out graduates faster than jobs could be created, and thus leading to alienation and instability.¹¹ Relative deprivation, frustration, "cognitive heuristics," and similar emotions have been cited.¹² The youth bulge could be a source of "biographical availability" for protests and social movements – as Doug McAdam discussed in his study of the 1960s Freedom Movement in the USA, and as seen in the 2019 Hong Kong protests – or for protests tied to unemployment and other sources of frustration.¹³

Scholarship also has taken a longer historical view to theorize different pathways, as in Barrington Moore's comparative study, which focused on the role of a bourgeoisie in the transition from autocracy to democracy. Conversely, Rueschemeyer et al. point to the role of the working class as the key social force propelling democratization in the countries they studied.¹⁴ Other studies examine the interaction of economic, political, and social factors across time to explain the different institutional pathways taken by the Islamic world compared with the Christian West.¹⁵ The rentier state as a barrier to both industrialization and democracy became an influential thesis for the Middle East,

¹⁰ Campante and Chor (2011); see also Brady et al. (1995).

¹¹ Davies (1962); Huntington (1968): 48.

¹² Davies (1962); Gurr (1970); Weyland (2012).

¹³ McAdam (1988); on the youth bulge: Assaad and Roudi-Fahimi (2007); Urdal (2006).

¹⁴ Moore (1966); Rueschemeyer et al. (1992).

¹⁵ Acemoglu and Robinson (2006); Chaney (2012).

starting with the early works of Hossein Mahdavi and of Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, and continuing with Michael Ross.¹⁶

Leonid Grinin and his colleagues argue that the stability of democracy depends not so much on the formal constitution but on how political institutions coordinate with each other and “are ready to play the game.” They cite Schumpeter to the effect that “the human material of politics” – including officials in the various bureaucracies – “should be of sufficiently high quality,” and approvingly cite Inglehart and Welzel that “[d]emocracy is not just the result of clever elite bargaining and constitutional engineering. It depends on deep-rooted orientations among the people themselves.”¹⁷ These concepts help us assess the extent to which Arab countries were prepared for democratic outcomes.

If a higher national income is an advantageous endogenous feature for democratization, income inequality can threaten an entrenched elite in a nondemocracy. In their analysis of the experiences of Western Europe and Latin America, Acemoglu and Robinson note that non-democratic societies controlled by a rich elite may face the threat of revolution, especially during an economic downturn, and thus the elites may agree to democratize. An interesting finding is that highly unequal societies are less likely to consolidate democracy and may end up oscillating between regimes and suffering substantial fiscal volatility.¹⁸

But international factors and forces are as relevant as internal socio-political and cultural determinants. Sociologist Barbara Wejnert identifies two broad sets of factors that contribute to the making of democracy: *endogenous* or internal features, that is, socioeconomic development broadly defined; and *exogenous* variables that influence democratization via forces that work globally and within a region. This second set may be referred to as diffusion processes from media, international organizations, and connections to transnational advocacy networks.¹⁹ Democracy-promotion efforts by US or European Union agencies are a common, if controversial, form of diffusion. Movements and processes in one country can inspire citizens in other countries; diffusion may occur through social-movement demands,

¹⁶ Beblawi and Luciani (1987); Mahdavi (1978); Ross (2001, 2008). Inspired by the earlier works, Moghadam (1993) attributed MENA women’s low labor-force participation to the oil economy and limited industrialization.

¹⁷ Grinin et al. (2019): 176; see also Inglehart and Welzel (2005): 2.

¹⁸ Acemoglu and Robinson (2001). ¹⁹ Wejnert (2005).

achievements, and connections. (For example, Egypt's April 6 Youth Movement was clearly influenced by the Serbian Otpor youth movement against Milosevic; even the clenched fist symbol was similar.) Proximity, preexisting ties, and cultural similarities – *regional characteristics*, or the neighborhood effect – help the diffusion of democratization processes. Networks within regions – human rights advocacy networks, political parties, feminist activists – can aid the diffusion and adoption of democratic practices. Through such diffusion (or “contagion”) processes, whole countries, especially those within geographic or geo-cultural clusters, may be influenced. It is this combination of normative diffusion and development factors, Wejnert explains, that contributes to the adoption and sustainability of democracy.²⁰ Central and Eastern Europe, for example, had experienced at least a century of socioeconomic and cultural development, and its 1989–90 protests and democratic transitions saw considerable encouragement from Western elites, agencies, and democrats.

Revolutions and Democracy

The Arab Spring protests are widely known as revolutions, but the term revolution is perhaps used rather indiscriminately, as thorough-going social revolutions are historically rare. In Theda Skocpol's well-known definition, a *social revolution* entails a fast-paced foundational transformation of a society's state and class structures, including institutions and property relations. Skocpol's study focused on France, Russia, and China, and in a subsequent article she added the 1979 Iranian revolution to her list of social revolutions. Charles Tilly had famously associated war-making with state-making, but Skocpol explained that a key ingredient in the outbreak of a revolution was a war that weakened a state, followed by a fiscal crisis and elite fragmentation.²¹

The revolutions that Skocpol studied did not lead to democracy, certainly not liberal democracy. Karl and Schmitter argue that revolutions produce enduring patterns of power but not necessarily democratic ones.²² Still, elements of the French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions – with their themes of liberty, solidarity, social equality, and women's emancipation – certainly inspired activists in social movements as well as

²⁰ See Wejnert (2005). ²¹ Skocpol (1979, 1982); Tilly (1985).

²² Karl and Schmitter (1991).

the many Third World mass movements and revolutions that erupted in the mid-twentieth century.²³ Social revolutions, it should be noted, are differentiated from the many *political revolutions* that occurred in the twentieth century, including anti-colonial, independence, and liberation movements, most quite radical though less transformative of class and societal structures. Some also resulted in forms of popular democracy that included regular elections, as in the case of Nicaragua.²⁴ In the twentieth century, developing countries with dependent economies were more likely to generate what John Foran called “political cultures of resistance” against both entrenched elites and core domination, and the revolutionary leadership tended to be conversant with the experiences and goals of previous social revolutions. Such a political culture could then expand with a world-systemic crisis or opening, leading to a radical political revolution.²⁵

Although scholars of revolution were always cognizant of structural constraints to revolutionary transformations, the progressive and forward-looking nature of revolutions was an implicit, if not explicit, postulate. That assumption was challenged by the 1979 Iranian revolution and subsequent Islamization process. Later, the East European protests against communism and the return to capitalism launched discussions about the nature of change. For Timothy Garton-Ash, these were “refolutions,” although one might argue that what took place in Eastern Europe was less about reform and more about the complete overhaul of the previous economic, political, and ideological structures in place. At the same time, there were winners and losers in the collapse of communism and the onset of democratization. It is true that the East-Central European revolutions enjoyed a more propitious external environment, and the new democratic governments received considerable assistance from the USA and Western Europe, and soon were invited to join the European Union. However, there also was much dissatisfaction in the first few years of democratization on the part of citizens who had lost previous entitlements and now faced a precarious socioeconomic status. Democratization in the former Soviet Union featured massive wealth accumulation by a handful of well-connected individuals aided by the “big bang” argument for

²³ See also Hill (1984) for “radical ideas” of the English revolution; these too have diffused across time and space.

²⁴ See Chinchilla (1994); Farhi (1990); Parsa (2000).

²⁵ Chase-Dunn and Niemeyer (2009); Chase-Dunn et al. (2018); Foran (1997).

a quick transition to a market-based democracy there and in Central and Eastern Europe.²⁶

Some years later, protests broke out in some of the former Soviet republics, in what came to be known as the “color revolutions” in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. Whereas the classic social revolutions had entailed class-based redistributive ideology and change, the modern color revolutions were more concerned with democracy and opportunity, given their middle-class composition, itself the result of decades, if not a full century or more, of modernization. In addition, a necessary component of a revolution is the presence of skilled and influential members of society criticizing the regime, calling for change, seeking followers, and offering a vision of a better society. Sociologist Jack Goldstone argues in a 2009 paper that a new trend in revolutions was emerging: “moderate confrontations between crowds engaged in peaceful demonstrations and powerful authoritarian states that lost their confidence to defend themselves” and typically precipitated by fiscal crisis. Goldstone notes that such protests featured “the coalescence of diverse opposition groups around an *ideology of opposition* [emphasis in the original] that justifies and encourages rejection of state authority.” His conceptualization aligns with notions of “refolutions” or “electoral revolutions” offered by Garton-Ash and by Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik.²⁷ Indeed, sociologist Asef Bayat applied the concept of “refolution” to the Arab Spring protests, which is a more accurate description of the limited nature of both the demands and the outcomes.²⁸ Goldstone lists twelve components of a revolution and its processes, one of which could well be applied to understanding divergent outcomes in the Arab Spring: As long as the military and the police remain loyal to the state, an uprising will not succeed.

Goldstone’s observations about the causes, course, and outcomes of so-called color revolutions – lack of economic opportunity and the presence of a fiscal crisis, diverse social groups coalescing to reject state authority, the role of the military, the presence of skilled and influential members of

²⁶ As a researcher at UNU/WIDER in Helsinki, Finland, Moghadam observed meetings in 1990–1 of the new finance ministers of Central and Eastern European countries, led by American economist Jeffrey Sachs and Hungarian economist Janos Kornai. Since then, Sachs has become an eloquent voice of heterodox and people-oriented economic policy; Kornai remains unrepentant.

²⁷ Bunce and Wolchik (2006); Garton-Ash (1989); Goldstone (2009): 18–19.

²⁸ Bayat (2017).

society (civil society or political society) with a vision of democratic change, the wider global environment – are relevant to the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings. Those factors and forces, which we distill in Figures 1.1 and 3.1, shaped the structural, societal, and institutional opportunities and constraints faced by protesters in 2011, and continue to do so. What we would add is that in many cases, the outcomes of the color revolutions were weak democracies. This is likely because democratization processes in the periphery and semi-periphery of the world-system are influenced by exogenous factors and diffusion, which – as Wejnert has argued – could prove futile or even destructive.²⁹

In summary, until the late twentieth century, radical revolutions were the most common form of revolution, with ideology and leadership as key components. In the twenty-first century, ideology has not been in evidence; nor has “the party” been a guiding light and key organizer of protest and a new political agenda. The movements of the twenty-first century have been largely leaderless, “horizontal,” and nonideological, and they have encountered a more formidable global environment in terms of both the international political economy and the interstate system. We may posit that rising educational attainment, the presence of large modern middle classes and the participation of women with democratic aspirations, along with the absence of a centralized party and the abandonment of other features of past revolutions, have all combined to change the nature of twenty-first century uprisings while also blurring the distinction between revolution, social movement, and democratic transition. At the same time, observations by Wejnert and by Goldstone about weak democracies are apt. In the twenty-first century, and especially in the wake of the Global War on Terror and the Great Recession, the very social-structural, ideological, and world-systemic changes that impede social revolution also prevent robust and sustainable democracies.³⁰

Social Movements and Democracy

John Guidry, Michael Kennedy, and Mayer Zald point out that until relatively recently, most academic social-movement theory was

²⁹ Goldstone (2009): 31; see also Goldstone (2011b). See Wejnert (2005) on the legacy of colonialism in peripheral countries undergoing democratization, and the risks.

³⁰ See Moghadam (2020).

developed in the USA. Social movements were theorized not as anti-systemic but rather as alternative means of expressing a democratic pluralism or, as in the case of the civil rights, feminist, or gay rights movements, helping to deepen democracy through full citizenship for previously excluded or marginalized populations. The mobilization of resources was the key to success or failure in movement activity. The political-economy backdrop was missing in all but Marxist and world-system scholarship. In more recent years, social-movement analysis has broadened its geographic scope; it considers the role of social movements in democratization processes more broadly, is more cognizant of both capitalism and class, and examines gender dynamics.³¹

Feminist scholarship on women's prodemocracy movements has contributed to the literature on democratization. Pamela Paxton questions standard definitions and measurements of democracy that exclude women's suffrage and political rights. Laurel Weldon examines how American women's movements brought to public and government attention women's policy issues related to the family, work, and violence, and she shows how women's movement organizations helped to increase women's representation in the public sphere through their role as powerful policy advocates. Such action on behalf of marginalized groups, Weldon argues, deepens *representative democracy*. Graciela Di Marco emphasizes the significance of social movements to *radical democracy*, such as in the case of Argentine workers who took over factories abandoned by their owners following the financial crisis of 1998. For Di Marco, Argentine democracy deepened and was radicalized as a result of the social movements of the period, including the coalitions of workers, students, intellectuals, and feminists that brought to power the left-wing populist government of Nestor Kirchner. (This was, in fact, part of a broader regional wave of anti-neoliberal popular mobilization.) Yesim Arat shows how a vibrant feminist movement in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s contributed to *liberal democracy* in Turkey. Moghadam argues that the absence of women's rights in MENA was a key factor in the region's absence from democracy's third wave.³²

³¹ On the democratic underpinnings of social movements see Della Porta (2009); Klandermans and van Stralen (2015); Moghadam (2013a), ch. 3. On the application of social movement analysis to Islamist movements, see Wiktorowicz (2004); on social movements and the Arab Spring, see Beinín and Vairel (2013).

³² See Arat (1994); Di Marco (2011); Moghadam (2004, 2013b, 2018); Paxton and Hughes (2007); Weldon (2011).

Even so, outcomes of social movements are difficult to define, determine, and measure. Movements can have short-term or long-term consequences; they can succeed in their original goals or fail to do so and disband; or they can move into what sociologist Verta Taylor called an “abeyance” cycle, only to reemerge at a future date. As Tova Benski and her coauthors note, once a social-movement issue has been raised, “it becomes part of the culture and social agenda.”³³ We agree and would point to the renewed cycle of protests in MENA countries (and in Chile and Colombia) in 2019. Benski and her coauthors add that given the range of possible consequences, it is helpful to consider three main fields of probable outcomes: the political, cultural, and economic. Here we agree as well, and would add that these are influenced not only by the preexisting “modernization” conditions for democracy discussed earlier in this chapter, but more specifically by the nature of the state, society, and international environment, as we demonstrate in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Democracy Waves

If the history of democratization includes revolutions, social movements, and different models and practices of democracy, it also includes waves, famously identified by Huntington, who drew attention to flows and ebbs. In his account, the first wave occurred with the democratic revolutions of Europe and North America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some of the democratic revolutions lost momentum in the period between World Wars I and II, when authoritarian and fascist regimes arose; this included the democratic breakdowns in Italy in the early 1920s and in Germany a decade later. The second wave occurred after World War II, encompassing Germany, Italy, and Japan, but petered out in the 1960s, when authoritarian regimes arose again. The third wave began in the mid-1970s in Southern Europe, with the democratic transitions in Portugal, Greece, and Spain, followed by South Korea, the Philippines, and Latin America in the latter part of the 1980s and the former communist countries of Eastern Europe in 1989. Huntington had this third wave ending in 1990, but the trend continued with transitions in South

³³ Benski et al. (2013). On “abeyance” see Taylor (1989).

Africa (1990–4) and Indonesia (1998). Political liberalization occurred during this period in countries of the Middle East and North Africa, notably Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, Turkey, and Tunisia, but they were partial or aborted. The “fourth wave,” arguably launched by the so-called color revolutions, includes the Arab Spring protests and revolutions.

Huntington’s analysis highlights the uneven history of democracy, which includes setbacks and regressions, such as Germany’s fall into fascism in the 1930s. We would add the more recent shift toward right-wing populist-nationalism in many Global North and Global South democracies. Third-wave democratic transitions were concentrated in semi-peripheral countries, which possessed more of the preconditions discussed earlier in the chapter, and which occurred in a more propitious global environment. A country’s relationship to the core, and especially the hegemon, might enable or undermine its democratic prospects or sustainability. External intervention or control may impede efforts by social movements or their leaders to effect positive social change; this has occurred time and again in the semi-periphery and especially in peripheral countries throughout the history of the modern world-system.³⁴ A key difference between the third and fourth democracy waves is the extent of democracy promotion (noncoercive external influence), which has been far more prevalent in the fourth wave, although it has not supplanted coercive intervention. With a focus on the third and fourth waves of democratization, Table 2.1 moves beyond the Huntington framework by adding instances of “democratization” by external force.

³⁴ Examples of core-led *coups d’état* or other forms of intervention are numerous: the 1953 *coup d’état*, supported by the USA and UK, against Iran’s Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh; the US-sponsored 1954 military coup against Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz; the attempted toppling of Egyptian president Nasser by France, the UK, and Israel in 1956; the 1960 Western-backed coup against Congolese president Patrice Lumumba; the American war in Vietnam; support for Latin American military dictatorships and the controversial training of police and military at the School of the Americas in the USA; the 2002 attempted coup against Venezuela president Hugo Chavez; the forced removal by the USA of Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide; the 2009 military coup against Honduran president Manuel Zelaya, which the USA chose to support after the fact.

Table 2.1 *Third and fourth waves of democratization: successes, failures, and external impositions*

	<i>Third Wave: 1968–1990</i>	<i>Fourth Wave: 1991–Present</i>
Successes	Student revolts, 1968; Portugal, Greece, Spain; South Korea, Taiwan, Philippines; Chile, Argentina, Brazil; Eastern Europe	South Africa, 1994–7; Ghana, 1993–2001; Liberia, 2003; Kenya 1991, 2002; Northern Ireland, 1998; Latin American “pink tide,” 2001–15; Morocco, 1998–present; Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan 2004–05; Tunisia, 2011–14
Failures	Burma 1988; China 1989; Algeria 1990 ¹	Haiti, 2004 (Aristede and Fanmi Lavalas); Iran, 2009; Libya, Syria, Yemen 2011; Egypt 2013
External control or imposition		Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, 2000; Afghanistan, 2001; Iraq, 2003; Libya, 2011
Ongoing/continuing prodemocracy movements	Feminist movements; youth/student movements	Zapatista indigenous movement (Mexico, since 1994); Global justice movement (1999–2020); ² Morocco (since 1998, 2011); Chile 2011, 2019 Rojava (2014–20) ³ Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan (2019)

Note: Regressions or setbacks have occurred: Brazil (since 2019 under Jair Bolsonaro), the Philippines (since 2016 under Rodrigo Duterte), Hungary (since 2010 under Viktor Orbán). Burma had another opening in 2008, with elections in 2010 and 2015, but has since regressed due to its treatment of its minority Rohingya Muslim population.

¹ The failure in Algeria was caused by the violent extremism of the Islamist opposition as well as by the ruling party’s cancellation of the 1991 election results.

² This includes the anti-/alter-globalization movement, movements that gathered annually at the World Social Forum since 2001, and activism for environmental protection and climate justice. The brainchild of the Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT) and several left-wing intellectuals and social-movement activists, the WSF held its first meeting in Porto Alegre in 2001 and regularly met there and in other largely Global South venues.

³ Inspired by the writings of American anarchist writer Murray Bookchin as well as jailed PKK leader Öcalan, PKK-aligned Kurdish forces announced regional autonomy in northeastern Syria in early 2014, with elections, popular assemblies (co-led by a woman and a man), and a constitution. However, as reported by Human Rights Watch (2014c), major human rights abuses – including arbitrary arrests, unsolved killings and disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detention of political opponents, and the use of child soldiers in the PYD’s armed wing, the YPG – were reported in the Kurdish enclave under the PYD and the *Asayish* (secret police). Turkish forces invaded the region in October 2019 and has since occupied parts of it.

Pacts or Ruptures?

How the waves have come about – through revolutions, social movements, and other forms of collective action, through violent contention or through negotiations, compromises, and pacts – has been the subject of much debate. In a 2010 paper, Stradiotto and Guo provide a succinct overview of the literature on, and debates over, third-wave democratic transitions, highlighting the conflicting accounts about how the transitional period affects the new democracy.³⁵ If a regime transition is the “interval between one political regime and another,” as argued by O'Donnell and Schmitter, a democratic transition is the interval between an authoritarian polity and a democratic one.³⁶ The essential ingredient of a democratic transition is that political authority is derived from the free decision of an electorate.³⁷ Transition refers to the intermediate phase which begins with the dissolution of an old regime and ends with the establishment of a new one. Democratic transitions consist of two simultaneous but to some extent autonomous processes: a process of dissolution of the authoritarian regime and a process of emergence of democratic institutions. The “transfer of power” is usually identified as the key element, which by definition equals democratization.

Some argue that “pacted transitions” offer the most viable path to the installation of democracy. McFaul asserts that “in transitions from authoritarian rule . . . trade unions, the left, and radicals more generally must not play a major role in the transition process, and only a limited role in the new political system that eventually emerges.”³⁸ Transitions work best when they are protracted, slow, and deliberate, as occurred in Latin America. Other scholars, however, claim that such transitions negatively affect democratic deepening and consolidation by depressing the level of competition or contestation across political parties in the subsequent democracy.³⁹ Terri Lynn Karl suggests that pacts tend to demobilize new social forces and circumscribe the participation of certain actors in the future. Still others argue that transition through revolution or breakdown of the *ancien régime* is the least problematic transition, as the opposition can impose demands for unrestricted

³⁵ Stradiotto and Guo (2010).

³⁶ O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986): 6, cited in Stradiotto and Guo (2010): xx.

³⁷ Linz and Stepan (1996); Przeworski (1991). ³⁸ McFaul (2006).

³⁹ Karl (1990); O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986); Przeworski (1991).

elections and the old elites are unable to interfere in the democratization process. This, at any rate, is what occurred in Portugal, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Baltic states. Munck and Leff suggest that reform through rupture is the least difficult type of transition since it results in a break from the past and allows the opposition to take part in unrestricted elections.⁴⁰ Such a quick transformation to democracy, however, is potentially troublesome, as it reduces the incentives for elites to foster cooperative relationships and consensus with others during the transitional period. Stradiotto and Guo argue that the mode of transition directly impacts the success and failure of democracy, and they conclude that cooperative transitions, where opposition groups work together with incumbent elites to peacefully transition the state, result in democracies that last longer and are associated with higher measures of democratic quality. Chenoweth and Stephan argue that violent tactics are self-defeating in that they prevent democratization.⁴¹ It follows that pacts among political groups, whether in the previous regime or within the opposition, are more likely to bring about democratic transitions.

Huntington insisted that “democratic regimes that last have seldom, if ever, been instituted by mass popular actors.”⁴² Sociologist Ali Kadivar challenges that “elitist” approach, presumably shared also by other scholar-proponents of pacted transitions to liberal democracy. Using a data set of 112 young democracies in 80 different countries, Kadivar shows that new democracies growing out of mass mobilization are more likely to survive than are new democracies that were born amid quiescence. His case study of South Africa confirms that the longer the mobilization, in the form of a “sustained unarmed uprising,” the more likely the ensuing democracy may survive, as it is built on an organizational structure that provides a leadership cadre for the new regime, forges links between the government and society, and strengthens checks on the power of the post-transition government. With coauthor Neil Ketchley, Kadivar conducts an analysis of all eighty democratic transitions held between 1980 and 2010 to reveal the salience of *unarmed collective violence* by civilian forces, including riots, disruptive strikes by workers, throwing stones or Molotov

⁴⁰ Karl and Schmitter (1991); Munck and Leff (1997).

⁴¹ Chenoweth and Stephan (2012); Stradiotti and Guo (2010).

⁴² Huntington (1968), cited in Kadivar (2018): 391.

cocktails, and attacks on police stations. Remaining unarmed may be more consequential for a democracy campaign, they conclude, than adhering to nonviolence.⁴³

How do these scholarly debates – and the historical record – apply to the Arab uprisings? Tunisia and Egypt both had “mass popular actors” but Tunisia’s transition (and indeed the subsequent crises that arose) was settled at the negotiating table(s), whereas Egypt’s ended with a military intervention. Syria’s militant opposition refused to negotiate with the government, choosing the route of armed violence and thus prolonging the conflict. Tunisia’s democratic transition received some criticism – by citizens as well as outside observers – for its inclusion of personalities from the Ben Ali regime, but such a move was hardly unprecedented in the history of democratic transitions (see also next section). What may distinguish the Arab uprisings from those in the “third wave” is the extent of coercive international intervention. Indeed, the nature of international connections and interventions shaped the possibility for a democratic transition and its dynamics and trajectory across our seven cases.

In what follows, we provide a summary view of third-wave democratic transitions to discern common patterns and any lessons for the Arab Spring. As noted, between 1974 and 1990, democratic transitions took place in Southern Europe (Greece, Portugal, Spain), Latin America (especially Argentina, Brazil, Chile), Southeast Asia (notably South Korea and Philippines), and Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (1989–91). In most cases, they were protracted transitions, sometimes preceded by mass protests, but often characterized by lengthy negotiations and compromises among political parties. Here we mention only a few of the cases. The role of women, and women’s rights, is also considered.

⁴³ Kadivar (2018); Kadivar and Ketchley (2018). We would point out that first-wave feminism’s struggle for suffrage in England entailed in part violent tactics by militant women; such tactics, when combined with lobbying efforts by more conventional suffrage groups, helped win the vote for women and thus begin to expand and deepen British democracy. The anti-globalization protests of the 1990s and into the new century, part of the Global Justice Movement, regularly saw the participation of the anarchist Black Bloc (although in some progressive quarters they were very unpopular). The *gilets jaunes* protests in France in 2018–19 similarly deployed unarmed violent means at times and at least succeeded in forcing the French president to reverse the fuel tax.

Dynamics of Democracy's Third Wave

Portugal's transition from authoritarianism to democracy went through several stages, including an initial radical stage, launched in April 1974 by military officers and complemented by a simultaneous peaceful mass movement in Portugal. Women's groups played a key role in Portugal's protests, and the "Revolution of Carnations" and democratic transition that followed favored women's rights. The country eventually settled into a social democracy, with new constitutions in 1982 and 1989 removing references to socialism, nationalization, and the like, and enshrining a liberal democracy, in line with Western models.

Many Portuguese had long been opposed to the colonial project, especially the mobilization of young men for the colonial army. When officers in the colonies rebelled, the Portuguese revolution took off, with massive protests in the mainland. The fall of the dictatorship on April 25, 1974 was followed by a turbulent period (especially the "hot summer of 1975") with divisions between radicals and moderates. Initially, a socialist constitution and multiparty parliamentary system ensued, with a powerful role for the Communist Party of Portugal, and Portugal withdrew from its African colonies. At this time, too, women felt free to express their needs and demand rights, and in May, they began to organize a movement to legalize divorce. Women were allowed to occupy local administrative posts, diplomatic posts, and the magistrate; sex requirements for all electoral posts were abolished and a Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1977.⁴⁴ Portugal's experiment with socialism ended in the 1980s, with the coming of centrist political parties and constitutional changes in 1982 and 1989, which dropped references to objectives such as "to ensure the transition to socialism" and "socialize the means of production and end the exploitation of man by man." Denationalization and privatization ensued, although Portugal remained committed to a form of social democracy that also supported women's rights. In 1986, Portugal was admitted to the European Economic Community, the precursor to the European Union. Portugal's political revolution was initially a rupture caused by a military uprising and mass mobilization, but its lengthy transition did involve pacts between the major political actors.

⁴⁴ Lloyd-Jones (2001); we also acknowledge the research assistance of Anjuli Fahlberg.

Democratic Transition in Latin America

Latin American countries with strong military institutions, landowning classes, and business elites with ties to the USA endured a period of military dictatorships and extensive human rights violations. Between 1964 and 1976, “national-popular” governments were overthrown in Brazil, Chile, and Argentina. Between 1983 and 1990 the three countries experienced democratic transitions largely through political mechanisms and pacted negotiations.

Brazil’s March 1964 American-supported military coup took place against the government of President João Goulart (Brazilian Labour Party). Military dictatorship lasted twenty-one years until the 1985 election of Tancredo Neves (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement), followed in October 1988 by a new democratic constitution.⁴⁵ In Chile, the socialist president Salvador Allende became president in 1970 and tried to establish socialism by democratic means, with the support of leftist parties (Popular Unity). He was overthrown in September 1973 by an American-backed military coup led by Augusto Pinochet. The 1978 amnesty law was intended to protect those who might be charged in the future with human rights violations, and the 1980 constitution ensured that Pinochet could remain as president for eight more years with increased powers, after which he would face a reelection plebiscite. Chile’s transition began in 1988, as a negotiated process, when 54.71 percent of Chileans voted “no” in the presidential plebiscite. The military and opposition negotiated for a slow, gradual transition with many guarantees for the preservation of military privileges. In 1990, Chileans elected Patricio Aylwin from the Concertation of Parties for Democracy as their president.⁴⁶ In Argentina, the March 1976 military coup overthrew the president, Isabel Martinez de Perón (Justicialista Party) and installed a civil-military dictatorship. Argentina went through the transition process seven years later, after the military’s defeat in the 1982 Malvinas War with the UK, and elections were held in October 1983. Raúl Alfonsín (Radical Civic Union Party) was elected president with

⁴⁵ Tancredo Neves became gravely ill on the eve of his inauguration and died without taking office. Therefore, the first civilian president since 1964 was José Sarney, the elected vice-president.

⁴⁶ The Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia – CPD – was an alliance among the Christian Democrats and the parties that were formerly part of the UP – except for the Communist Party.

51.75 percent of the vote, and in 1994 a new constitution was adopted, enshrining liberal democracy.

Democratic consolidation was conditioned by the structural adjustment policies implemented in the 1980s; there were thus winners and losers in the democracies that ensued, whereby social inequalities limited the deepening of the new democracies. This lasted until the mid-2000s when a new process of democratization took place, especially in Brazil and Argentina.⁴⁷ In reaction to neoliberalism, income inequality, and poverty, and in the wake of the financial crises of the late 1990s and early 2000s, parliamentary and presidential elections resulted in a “pink tide” of left-wing governance in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela. The Brazilian governments after 2002, led first by Luis Inazio da Silva and later by Dilma Rousseff (Workers’ Party), and the Argentine leaders after 2003, Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Justicialista Party), took into account popular dissatisfaction with the social effects of neoliberal policies and tried to broaden the scope of welfare and citizenship. The governments restored the role of the state in narrowing income and social inequalities and encouraged popular representation in democratic institutions. In Chile, Michelle Bachelet of the Socialist Party was elected president in 2006 and reelected in 2013, but the neoliberal policies established by Pinochet’s authoritarian-repressive government continued, and little effort was made to reduce income inequality – generating renewed mass protests in 2019.

One important dimension of the democratization process was commitment to justice and accountability for past human rights violations, which had been especially appalling in Chile and Argentina. Argentina’s National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons was created in 1983 to supersede the military’s amnesty law; it reported 8,960 disappearances during the 1976–83 military rule, but it was not until the early 1990s that a systematic search began for the missing children of the disappeared.⁴⁸ The trial against the nine military officers

⁴⁷ We are grateful to Professor Graciela Di Marco for these insights.

⁴⁸ The famous Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who helped bring down the military junta with their daily rallies, maintain that as many as 30,000 people “were disappeared” during Argentina’s “dirty war.” See www.history.com/news/mothers-plaza-de-mayo-disappeared-children-dirty-war-argentina

of the first three military juntas took place in 1985 and ended with their conviction, and more occurred after Néstor Kirchner's presidency.⁴⁹

Brazil initially avoided a Truth Commission through its 1979 Amnesty Law, but President Dilma Rousseff created the National Truth Commission in 2013 to investigate torture and human rights violations that occurred between 1964 and 1985; it concluded its work in April 2014. In Chile, the 1990 law created the National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation which covered cases including the nearly 2,000 Chileans killed (executed or tortured to death by state agents) or disappeared. The Rettig Report was published in February 1991.

In Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, women's groups met, marched, and demonstrated for human rights, women's rights, and democracy. Argentina's Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo played a significant role, beginning in 1977, in challenging the military dictatorship, and they became one of many prodemocracy social movements and human rights advocacy networks. In all three countries, women's groups played an important role in the opposition to authoritarianism; they made a significant contribution to the "end of fear" and the inauguration of the transition; and they organized as feminists and as democrats, often allying themselves with left parties.⁵⁰ Though they were not key actors in the negotiated transitions, they received institutional rewards when democratic governments were set up and their presence in the new parliaments increased. Argentina, in fact, was the first country to establish a quota law to increase women's political representation, in 1991. As Jane Jaquette observed:

[F]eminist issues were positively associated with democratization, human rights, and expanded notions of citizenship that included indigenous rights as well as women's rights. This positive association opened the way for electoral quotas and increased the credibility of women candidates, who were considered more likely to care about welfare issues and less corrupt than their male counterparts.⁵¹

The positive association also opened the door to the creation of women's policy agencies, the adoption of laws against domestic violence, liberalizing divorce procedures, and introducing quotas to increase women's political representation.

⁴⁹ See also Sikkink (2012).

⁵⁰ Alvarez (1990); Jaquette (1994); Waylen (1994, 2007).

⁵¹ Jaquette (2001): 114.

Southeast Asia: The Philippines and South Korea

The Marcos dictatorship began in 1972, and it became synonymous with martial law, clientelistic loyalties and cronyism, social injustice, and arbitrary arrests. Marcos' manipulation of the 1978 legislative election angered traditional oppositionists, while radical opponents were inspired by developments in Nicaragua, and talk of a united front ensued. In the midst of a succession struggle for the presidency, Senator Benigno S. Aquino, Jr., was assassinated in August 1983. Millions of Filipinos demonstrated against the regime, especially when martial law was reinstated. Marcos thought he could win the snap election he called, but he lost. Corazon Aquino became the country's first democratically-elected president and first woman leader. Rather than a pacted or negotiated transition, the Philippines is an example of competition between moderates and radical oppositionists to overthrow an unyielding regime.⁵² Still, as the first democratic transition in Asia during the third wave, the Philippine transition had a demonstration effect on the region, and "people power" became part of the international vocabulary of democratization.⁵³

South Korea's slow transition began with student protests against Chun Doo-hwan's dictatorship and the aftermath of the May 1980 Kwangju Massacre.⁵⁴ Student and labor protests continued, Chun held elections in 1985 to assuage international public opinion in advance of the 1988 Olympics, and the result was a major moral victory for the opposition, led by Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam. The opposition's key demand was direct presidential elections, which Chun sought to foil through a delay-and-defer campaign; a parliamentary committee debated various proposals for months until its suspension. More demonstrations followed, led by labor,

⁵² Thompson (1995).

⁵³ The 1986 uprising is also known as the EDSA revolution. However, the Philippines remained plagued by cronyism, poverty, and inequality. Another uprising took place in 2001, against President Estrada. See Walden Bello et al., *The Anti-developmental State: The Political Economy of Permanent Crisis in the Philippines*. (New York: Zed Books, 2005). Also see his essay, "Requiem for the EDSA State?," www.waldenbello.org/requiem-for-the-edsa-state-part-2-regime-change-and-the-political-economy-of-development/. Since 2016, the Philippines has been ruled by strongman Rodrigo Duterte.

⁵⁴ Also transliterated as Gwangju, the city was the site of a popular uprising after protesting students were killed; estimates are of 2,000 citizens killed.

university students, and churches. The January 1987 death under torture of detained student leader Park Jong-chul was revealed in May by the Catholic Priests Association for Justice, which also announced a June 10th demonstration in his honor. Mass protests continued until June 20, during which another student was badly injured and later died of his wounds. Those events compelled Chun to hold elections and restore civil liberties. Roh Tae-woo, handpicked by Chun, was elected president that December with a bare plurality, but the democratic consolidation of South Korea was underway: the constitutional bill had been adopted in October, enshrining natural and legal rights, direct presidential elections, and the power of the National Assembly. In the 1992 presidential election, democracy activist Kim Young-sam prevailed, and what followed were concerted moves to consolidate democratic reforms.⁵⁵

In both countries, women's participation – as workers, mothers, militants, and ordinary citizens – was crucial. The Korean Women's Associations United emerged as part of the democracy movement, while GABRIELA was formed as an alliance of left-wing women's organizations involved in the anti-dictatorship movement.⁵⁶ The post-transition period saw laws to improve women's rights with respect to employment, family headship, domestic violence, and sexual crimes.⁵⁷ Women's legal rights and their social participation improved with democratization in both countries. Poverty and inequality have plagued women in the Philippines far more than in South Korea, but women's inclusion, political participation, and nonviolence constituted a key factor in the number of negotiations that subsequently took place between the government and rebel or opposition groups.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Adesnik and Kim (2008); and Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/June_Struggle

⁵⁶ See "GABRIELA USA Further Advances the Filipina Women's Movement on National Women's Day of Protest," GABRIELA USA, Oct. 27, 2013, <https://gabusbabackup.wordpress.com/2013/10/27/gabriela-usa-further-advances-the-filipina-womens-movement-on-national-womens-day-of-protest/>

⁵⁷ For details see Moghadam and Mohr (2015), www.mei.edu/publications/womens-rights-organizations-and-democratic-transitions-north-africa-and-southeast-asia

⁵⁸ Nagel (2020).

Democracy Deficits

Democratization has not always benefited all citizens; nor has it remained robust in the face of a changing global environment and internal challenges. In the early 1990s, sub-Saharan African governments were encouraged to liberalize politically, but the experience was not without tremendous turmoil, as countries endured civil conflicts, many of which were ethnic based. The new African democracies faced tough competition for their exports and corruption at home, resulting in the lack of democratic development that has generated large flows of migrants seeking refuge or jobs in Europe. This confirms the earlier point about “weak democracies,” especially in the world-system’s periphery.

The democratic transitions in Eastern Europe after 1989 are frequently cited as exemplifying what feminist scholars termed the gender paradox.⁵⁹ East European women were not able to influence the transition and lost key rights when the democratic governments were set up. Feminists coined the terms “male democracy” and “democratization with a male face” to describe the outcome of the transition from communism to liberal democracy, when women’s representation in parliaments dropped dramatically from an average of 30 percent to 8–10 percent. That outcome is usually attributed to reaction against communist notions of equality, when many of the institutional arrangements that had guaranteed the participation of women, workers, peasants, and other groups were dismantled. Prior to the collapse of communism, Soviet women’s employment levels were among the highest in the world, but with integration in the global market economy they declined substantially. By the late 1990s, women’s unemployment skyrocketed to 60–70 percent in Russia and Ukraine, while the rate for men was also high, reaching an average of 40–50 percent.⁶⁰ In democratizing Kyrgyzstan, the government closed regional maternity units when faced with limited economic resources, causing maternity mortality to skyrocket.⁶¹

Algeria saw a period of political liberalization in the late 1980s, parallel to the government’s adoption of economic liberalization. The measures were sparked by the 1988 protests and advice from the World Bank and the IMF, but the opening was not smooth. Algeria had been long ruled by a single party system in the “Arab socialist” style. The death of President Boumédiène in December 1978 brought about

⁵⁹ Heinen (1992); Waylen (2007): 1. ⁶⁰ Wejnert (2015): 10.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 17–18.

political and economic changes, including the growth of an aggressive Islamist movement, and a government intent on economic restructuring. The *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) asserted itself, despite a law banning religious-based political parties, and its adherents had already begun to harass women who were unveiled or living alone or – in their judgment – otherwise behaving inappropriately. This is why so many educated Algerian women opposed the FIS after its expansion in 1989.⁶² The urban riots of 1988 were followed quickly by a new constitution and elections, without a transitional period of democracy-building. The electoral victory of the FIS alarmed not only Algeria's feminist organizations, but also the military and ruling party, which stepped in to annul the election results. The quick transition unsupported by strong institutions did not serve women well. That the FIS went on to initiate an armed rebellion when it was not allowed to assume power following the 1991 elections only confirms the violent nature of that party.⁶³

The above cases suggest that the relationship between democratization and women's participation and rights is not straightforward. Women can pay a high price when a democratic process is institutionally weak, or is not founded on principles of equality and the rights of all citizens; this allows a political party bound by patriarchal norms to come to power and to immediately institute laws relegating women to second-class citizenship. At least one empirical study of 160 countries between 1900 and 2012 tries to show that there can be “no democratic transition without women's rights,” although it assumes a period of liberalization with civil rights in advance of democratization.⁶⁴ In other words, democratization succeeds with women when a period of civil society growth has occurred, including the growth of women's movements. This point is especially relevant to Tunisia, and to a lesser extent Morocco, as we elucidate in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁶² The bullying tactics of Islamists and their harassment of women were discussed at a 1990 conference that Moghadam organized at UNU/WIDER, Helsinki, Finland. See also Brown et al. (2006).

⁶³ Bennoune (1995); Cherifati-Merabtine (1995); Messaoudi and Schemla (1995); Moghadam (2001); Salhi (2010).

⁶⁴ Wang et al. (2015). Women's advancement, the authors argue, increases the cost of repression.

MENA

The 1990s saw a proliferating Middle East scholarship on democracy and civil society, and its relationship to the economic liberalization that was taking place across the region.⁶⁵ Prodemocracy advocates in MENA were aware of democratic transitions elsewhere, and democracy diffusion helped develop ideas and constituencies. The UNDP's Human Development Report Office helped launch the Arab Human Development Report (AHDR), which identified three deficits in the MENA region – the knowledge deficit, the freedom deficit, and women's empowerment deficit – and challenged governments and societies to overcome them. Its 2004 report offered a definition of “good governance,” a term it preferred to “democracy”:

- Safeguards freedom to ensure the expansion of people's choices (the core of human development);
- Rests upon effective popular participation and full representation of the public at large;
- Is buttressed by first-rate institutions (in contrast to the tyranny of the individual), which operate efficiently and with complete transparency. Those institutions are subject to effective accountability among themselves, protected by the government's separation of powers, and by a balance among those powers; they are also directly accountable to the populace through popular selection processes that are regular, free, and scrupulously fair;
- Ensures that the rule of law is supreme; and the law itself is fair, protective of freedom, and applies equally to all;
- Sees that an efficient, fair, and strictly independent judiciary upholds application of the law and the executive branch duly implements judicial rulings.⁶⁶

Between 2002 and 2009, five reports were produced, written by a group of Arab social scientists and issued in Arabic, English, and French. Widely discussed across the region and internationally, the reports were provocative but well-argued and provided a refreshing and evidence-based perspective on the region's deficits and needed

⁶⁵ Harik and Sullivan (1992); Niblock and Murphy (1993); Norton (1995). See also Chapter 4.

⁶⁶ UNDP (2004): 8.

solutions. As such, they anticipated the sociopolitical and economic grievances and demands of the Arab Spring protests of 2010–11.⁶⁷

In spring 2011, Carl Greshman, head of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a US democracy-promotion organization tied to the Democratic Party, penned an article entitled “The Fourth Wave: Where the Middle East revolts fit in the history of democratization – and how we can support them” and offered the following advice:

- Create an interim civilian authority that can work with the political opposition and civic groups to determine the rules, design and timetable of the transition. Elections should be sequenced such that new political parties – or ones repressed under the former regime – have the time and capacity to mobilize their constituency.
- Economic reform is important. Democracy must deliver to the people, with social rights and well-functioning social institutions in health, education, welfare, and job creation in both the public and private sectors.
- Transnational linkages help. Civil society groups may seek the assistance and support of the World Movement for Democracy, the Stockholm-based IDEA, the International Civil Society Action Network, and similar organizations. The new political parties can seek connections with like-minded political parties in democratic countries.
- Democracy needs to be understood not just electorally but also as entailing systems of legality, citizenship, individual freedom, civil society pluralism, respect for minorities, social justice, and social mobility. In such a system, religion may be recognized in the public space and the public sphere but without any claim to political monopoly.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ The AHDRs were *Creating Opportunities for Future Generations* (2002), *Building a Knowledge Society* (2003), *Towards Freedom in the Arab World* (2004), *Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World* (2005), and *Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries* (2009). A *Synthesis Report on Youth Forums* (2008) emerged from a series of meetings in Amman, Jordan, in 2007–08. The sixth AHDR, *Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*, appeared in 2016. The regional reports, along with national Arab Human Development reports and a research paper series are available at <http://arab-hdr.org/>

⁶⁸ Greshman (2011).

This was sound advice. More recently, Ibrahim Elbadawi and Samir Makdisi penned a study of the Arab region's democratic transition that includes illuminating country case studies. In their own chapter, Elbadawi and Makdisi agree with the argument for pacted transitions. When states transition through peaceful cooperative pacts, characterized by opposition groups and incumbents agreeing to forgo the capacity to harm each other in the interest of transitioning the state, the quality of democracy is higher in the post-transitional phase and it lasts longer. (This is especially pertinent to Tunisia.) Their statistical analysis of the Arab region's democratic transitions finds that transitions are hindered by the presence of natural resources, home wars, regional wars, and political repression. "Partial democracies" are more susceptible to democratic transition than are autocracies, especially when they are located in "democratic neighborhoods"; moreover, high unemployment in the context of the failing authoritarian bargain encourages democratic transition.⁶⁹ Other scholars, however, would emphasize cultural and organizational prerequisites, such as large-scale political organizations, careful analysis of the existing power constellation, and assessment of the prevailing opportunities and risks. Weyland notes that the Arab protests, instead, "were spearheaded by newly mobilized, weakly organized sectors . . . who had little political knowledge and experience [and] relied heavily on cognitive shortcuts." The combination of "inchoate polities" and "suppressed civil societies" did not bode well.⁷⁰ In other words, diffusion and contagion are not enough; societies must be better prepared, and protests and transitions must be better led. Again, this is where Tunisia had an advantage over the other cases. Indeed, Alfred Stepan wrote that Tunisia seemed uniquely prepared for "the twin tolerations": that of religious citizens toward the state, and that of laws and officials vis-à-vis the rights of religious and non-religious citizens.⁷¹

Conclusions

The literature and historical record show that the relative weight and hierarchy of endogenous and exogenous factors and forces – educational attainment, income, political and civic institutions, the middle

⁶⁹ Elbadawi and Makdisi (2017b), especially pages 72–4.

⁷⁰ Weyland (2012): 923. ⁷¹ Stepan (2012).

and working classes, the role and status of women, cultural values and practices, transnational solidarities, diffusion processes, the global environment, and international actors – shape the nature of prodemocracy protests and their outcomes. In our book, we provide a complementary but more focused set of explanatory variables, and we show how they interacted to produce the divergent outcomes of the 2011 Arab uprisings.

Were all the Arab countries prepared for a transition to a democratic order? We agree with Welzel's observation that modernization increases ordinary people's capabilities and willingness to struggle for democratic freedoms, as it places more resources into the hands of ordinary people, enhancing their capacity for collective action and for "effective democracy."⁷² Successful democracies emerge from strong and healthy societies that include local authorities, political parties, trade unions, professional associations, and other CSOs with a commitment to citizen rights. This paves the way for the expansion and codification of rights to women, minorities, and other excluded social actors through a rights-based model of state-building. Prerequisites for democracy are societal conditions and collective action, but people must believe in freedoms. What we would add is that economic difficulties and wide inequalities, conflicts and war, and of course external intervention, threaten democracies as well as transitions. We now turn our attention to the factors and forces that enabled, or prevented, democratization and stability in seven countries that experienced the Arab uprisings.

⁷² Welzel (2009): 75, 86.

3 *States and Political Institutions*

This chapter analyzes institutional development and variation across our seven country cases prior to and following the uprisings. Entrenched institutional and structural barriers to political participation and uneven socioeconomic development created the precise conditions that autocrats sought to control – mass societal mobilization. The 2011 Arab uprisings created a collective regional security dilemma for ruling autocrats as the unprecedented cascading effect of popular social movements spread rapidly across the region. Reflecting prolonged political decay, mass mobilization indicated a deep crisis of legitimacy for autocrats sustained largely by a repressive coercive apparatus and crony capitalism imbued in neoliberalization. As protesters adapted and learned from each other through the diffusion of informational, network, cultural, and behavioral links during the initial wave of the uprisings between late 2010 and early 2011, autocratic incumbents, too, adapted in response to changing dynamics and pressures.¹ As Heydemann and Leenders state, the parallel processes of social mobilization and the counterrevolutionary strategies of regimes were shaped by “processes of learning and diffusion among regime elites, especially among those in which protests began later in the sequence of events that constitute the Arab uprising.”²

We examine macro- and meso-level variation in the institutional and structural conditions that galvanized popular mobilizations and map their trajectory a decade following the uprisings. The protests were a culmination of an enduring struggle for political liberalization and democratization.³ As we have noted, only Tunisia succeeded in embarking on a path of political and democratic liberalization. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, political liberalization can stagnate in the face of economic and social crises. Tunisia’s democratic

¹ Hale (2013): 333–4; Norris (2012): 56; Zubaida (2012).

² Heydemann and Leenders (2014): 76. ³ Brynen et al. (1995): 3.

transition received international accolades, but socioeconomic stagnation and years of stalled growth have generated citizen dissatisfaction and protests. A decade following the uprisings, unemployment and especially youth unemployment rates, as indicators of economic development and key drivers of mobilization, rose between 2008 and 2018 in most of our seven cases, as seen in Figure 3.1.

We posit that the strength or weakness of state institutions – military, political, juridical – shaped both the nature of the protests and the outcomes. At the same time, external intervention adversely affected three of our cases – Libya, Syria, and Yemen – leading to weakened states, terrorism, deprivation, and institutional failures. In only one case, Bahrain, did external military intervention strengthen the state – although it did nothing to help Bahrain transition to democracy. As is well known, MENA states historically have had high levels of military spending, with regimes generously funding their military sectors. This only increased in the years after the uprising (see Figure 3.2).

Before and After the Uprisings: Mapping State and Institutional Trajectories

Our focus here is on the state and political institutions. Our variable illuminates the nature of the political system, state ideology, and institutions, including the role and power of the military, state capacity, and center-periphery relations. We use state in the Weberian sense to denote “a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.”⁴ We define a regime as entailing “patterns of allocation, use, and abuse of power in a polity.”⁵ Despite differences in their political systems, all the states examined here shared authoritarian features at the time of the uprisings, suppressing or co-opting challengers.⁶ Since the uprisings, states have oscillated between deeply autocratic and more hybrid systems, such as Morocco, with only Tunisia transitioning to democracy. Egypt became “partly free” during the initial transition in 2012 to “not free” following the 2013 *coup d'état* that ousted the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)-dominated government. States that experienced externally-aided coercive interventions – Bahrain, Libya, Syrian, and

⁴ Weber (1991): 78. ⁵ Chehabi and Linz (1998): 10.

⁶ Schlumberger (2007): 14. See also Gandhi (2008).

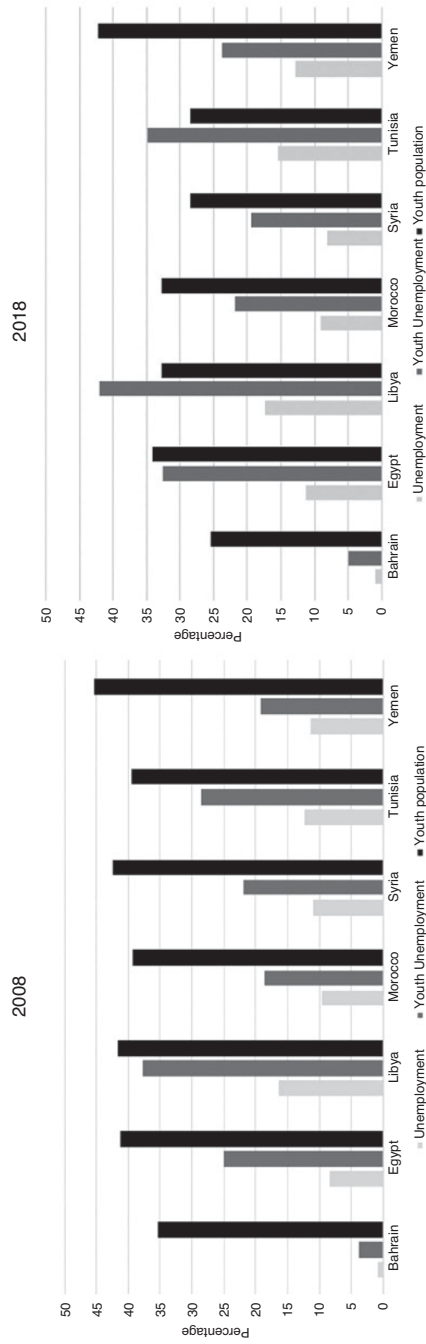


Figure 3.1 Unemployment, youth unemployment, and youth population.
Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators. Youth are sums of male and female percentage populations aged 15–24.

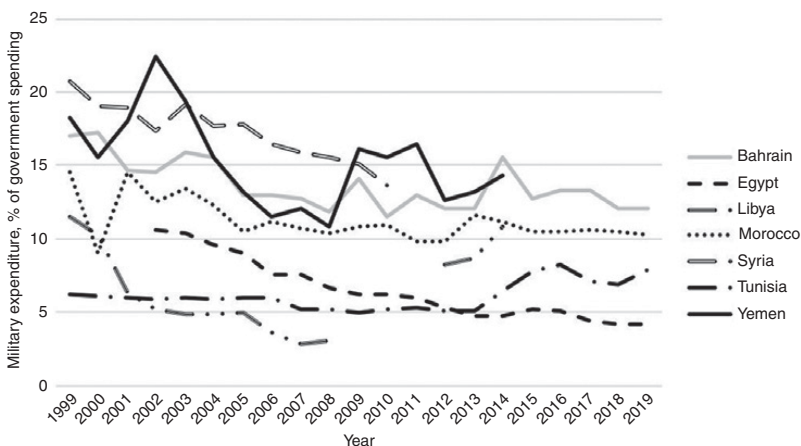


Figure 3.2 Military expenditure as % of government spending, 1999–2019.

Note: Some Arab countries spend considerably more on the military than on health, although education spending tends to be high. Jordan and the GCC countries, and especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are the major spenders on armaments, largely from the USA (which is also the biggest military spender globally).

Yemen – produced violent outcomes, including prolonged and internationalized civil wars and a failed state. Table 3.1 illustrates regime type and autocracy and freedom rankings.

Mass mobilization poses two options for incumbent autocrats: repression and authoritarian control on the one hand, power-sharing on the other.⁷ Cases that experienced more positive *initial* transitions – Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco – opened up the political landscape as regimes were either ousted; in Morocco’s case, the regime undertook constitutional amendments to placate protester demands. The 2013 coup in Egypt reinstated authoritarian control following the ouster of the country’s only democratically elected government. In Yemen, President Saleh’s ouster in the absence of a viable opposition failed to produce a pluralistic political order. The Saudi-led coalition that began its assault on Yemen in 2015 hampered any prospects for national reconciliation and produced an internationalized civil war and what the UN in 2019 called the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.⁸ Conversely, the Saudi intervention in Bahrain

⁷ Svolik (2012): 2. ⁸ UNSMIL (2019).

Table 3.1 *Regime classifications: autocracy and freedom scores*

Country	Regimes of the World (RoW)	Polity Score (2018)	Freedom House (2018)
Bahrain	Closed autocracy	-10	6.5/not free
Egypt	Electoral autocracy	-4	6/not free
Libya	Closed autocracy	-77 (interregnum)	6.5/not free
Morocco	Electoral autocracy	-4	5/partly free
Syria	Closed autocracy	-9	7/not free
Tunisia	Electoral democracy	7	2.5/free
Yemen	Closed autocracy	-77 (interregnum)	6.5/not free

Source: RoW operationalizes four regime types—closed autocracy, electoral autocracy, electoral democracy, and liberal democracy and has strong agreement with other regime classifications, see Lührmann et al. (2018). Autocracy scores were obtained from the Systemic Peace’s Polity IV dataset. -10 denotes autocratic and 10 democratic. Freedom ranking obtained from Freedom House.

allowed the al-Khalifa monarchy to retain control through a violent crackdown on largely Shi’a protesters and dissidents. In Libya, the NATO-led intervention fractured the country’s fragile political arena and fractionalized an already polarized opposition. In Syria, Assad’s immediate suppression of the uprising and the subsequent regional and international interventions in support of warring groups, later joined by Russia and Iran in support of the Assad regime, enabled the latter to maintain control.

Understanding how autocracies respond to mass social mobilization illuminates the levels of control and cohesion, willingness to share power, or decision to acquiesce to or quell citizen demands. To capture variation in state and regime type, we examine change in the institutional and bureaucratic structures of the state to elucidate their effect on the prodemocracy movements that merged late 2010–11. We concur with Ellen Lust’s observation that “institutions can structure the political environment, affecting both the likelihood that opposition groups can mobilize and their desire to do so.”⁹ Given that institutions define relations of power among contending groups in society by mediating the parameters of cooperation and conflict, they “structure

⁹ Lust-Okar (2005): 30.

political situations and leave their own imprint on political outcome.”¹⁰ Thus, institutions not only structure the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, they also shape the motivations and opportunity costs of prodemocracy movements. Table 3.2 illuminates the governing and institutional composition of the states examined here.

As the regional anomaly, Tunisia remains the one Arab Spring country to have embarked on democratization, becoming the Arab world’s only democracy. This is largely because of the institutional preconditions present in Tunisia (as discussed in Chapters 2, 4, and 5), which in turn enabled the formation of new political institutions (the “High Commissions”) that helped shepherd the transitional year prior to the election for the Constituent Assembly. However, given that mass popular protests challenge the authoritarian status quo, such junctures often create a fissure in the power dynamics that previously structured the political, social, and economic configuration of the state. Democratic transitions then may “fail to provide any enduring or predictable solution to the problem of institutionalizing political power.”¹¹ This observation seems to apply to Tunisia, which, as with many new democracies, continues to experience political factionalism and polarization despite the establishment of democratic institutions.

Across the countries that experienced mass protests in 2011, the development of the state and political institutions generally lagged behind the evolution of society. As scholars from Marx and Engels onwards (including Samuel Huntington) have noted, the disjuncture between political and societal development leads to protest movements and sometimes to fully-fledged revolutions.¹² The fraying of the “authoritarian bargain” and rising unemployment in the 1990s at a time of growing educational attainment led to the protest cycle of the new century, which in turn demonstrated the fragility of the autocratic incumbents across the region. While the global diffusion of communication networks and access to new media connected and mobilized citizens across the region, structural and institutional factors aid in explaining variation in outcomes, as they “specify what can be done, by and to whom, for what purposes, and when, but also what happens when the rules are breached and who decides when they are.”¹³ Such factors and forces thus prime collective action choices, shape

¹⁰ Thelen and Steinmo (1992): 9. ¹¹ O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986): 6.

¹² Huntington (1968): 11. ¹³ Levi et al. (2008): 2.

Table 3.2 *Government and constitutional composition, 2018*

Country	Government type	Constitution (date)	Executive	Legislature	Judiciary	Political parties
Bahrain	Constitutional monarchy	2002	Monarch head of government and cabinet	Bicameral, monarchy veto powers, 80 members, 40 appointed by King	Appointed	Prohibited, political societies legalized in 2005
Egypt	Presidential republic	Several, last amended 2014	Presidential, three six-year terms	Unicameral, 596 seats, 28 appointed by president	Upper and lower courts, appointed by president	Limited
Libya	Transitional	2017 (draft)	Prime minister	Unicameral House of Representative	N/A	N/A
Morocco	Parliamentary constitutional monarchy	Several, last 2011	Monarch head government, PM appointed by King from winning party	Bicameral, elected	Appointed	Legal
Syria	Presidential republic	Several, last 2012	Presidential	Unicameral, 250 seats, elected	Appointed	Limited, regime sanctioned
Tunisia	Parliamentary republic	Several, last 2014	Presidential	Unicameral, 217 seats, elected	Elected and appointed by higher court	Legal-free
Yemen	Transitional	1991, amended 2009	Presidential	Bicameral, appointed and elected	Appointed	Limited

Source: CIA, *World Factbook*.

mobilization calculations, and determine regime responses to social and political unrest.

Country Case Studies

We now turn to our seven country cases. In the absence of military interventions, the protests in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia initially produced successful outcomes. Tunisia's Ben Ali was ousted on January 14, 2011 after his twenty-four-year reign, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak was ousted on February 11, 2011 following three decades in office, and Morocco's King Mohammed IV quickly agreed to constitutional concessions that, in the short term, alleviated further pressure and escalation. Prior to the protests, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia were ostensibly multiparty polities, albeit with restrictions on independent political parties and elections. Earlier, the three regimes had made tactical concessions on issues at different moments, notably after the bread riots of the late 1970s and the 1980s,¹⁴ but made no credible democratic reforms except for the opening in Morocco in 1998. The strategy of liberalizing just far enough to sustain dominance remained in place even as socioeconomic and political challenges undermined each regime's legitimacy. Of the three countries, Egypt had the most powerful military; indeed, Egypt's military was significantly more powerful than the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). Operating as a state-within-the-state, the military owned and controlled many profitable enterprises.¹⁵

Egypt

Gamal Abdel Nasser's anti-imperialism and his role in the 1956 Bandung Conference cemented his status as a prominent Third World leader. The environment began to change after Egypt's defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War with Israel, and more rapidly following Nasser's death, when Anwar Sadat replaced the pro-Soviet foreign policy and socialistic economy with a pro-US foreign policy and a market-oriented economy (*infitah*), along with a peace treaty with Israel. Uprisings in

¹⁴ According to Walton and Seddon (1994), Egypt's protests against structural adjustment and austerity took place in January 1977; Morocco had three such riots in June 1981, and Tunisia in January 1984. See also Table 1.1.

¹⁵ Achcar (2013): 149–51.

1977 followed by repression, increases in military spending, and US influence in Egypt led to grievances, providing space for the MB to grow and halting progress in women's rights. Sadat was assassinated by an Islamist guard in 1982 and replaced by Hosni Mubarak, another military man.

Hazem Kandil's historical analysis of Egypt shows how Nasser tried but failed to marginalize the power of the army after the 1952 coup/revolution, and how Sadat accelerated the presidency's shift away from law and legality and toward increasing reliance on extra-legal police action and the Central Security Forces, creating a police state.¹⁶ Under Mubarak, the police, military, and the NDP became the key institutional players. Assuming the presidency after Sadat's assassination, Mubarak accelerated his predecessor's political-economic shift while retaining key institutions such as the Muslim family law courts and the powerful Al-Azhar religious and educational institution. Coupled with the economic stagnation of the 1990s and into the new century, elite manipulations created enormous popular dissatisfaction. Under pressure to liberalize its economic and political system and contain dissent among contending social and political forces, most notably, the MB and the Kefaya (Enough!) movement, Mubarak opened the electoral playing field by allowing multicandidate elections in 2005. However, subsequent elections and referenda were meant to shore up regime loyalists to maintain the status quo by co-opting or limiting the opposition.

Although the MB was banned as a political entity per Egypt's 1977 Political Parties Law prohibiting religious parties, affiliated MB candidates were allowed to run as Independents in the 2005 election, winning eighty-eight parliamentary seats, the second largest party bloc after Mubarak's NDP.¹⁷ Two years later, a national referendum was held in March 2007 to amend thirty-four articles of the constitution to reflect four key priorities: banning of political parties based on religious, ethnic, or racial grounds; increasing the powers of the president to enable him to dissolve parliament and judicial monitoring of elections; and adoption of new anti-terrorism to replace the state of emergency law which had been in effect for decades.¹⁸ These amendments –

¹⁶ Kandil (2012).

¹⁷ IFES, Egypt Election Guide. See also Menjou and Elktasha (2007) for a critique.

¹⁸ IFES.

particularly the banning of judicial oversight of elections – were instrumental in ushering the electoral crisis that unfolded in 2010 whereby Mubarak and the NDP manipulated the first round of the elections to obstruct the MB, the largest opposition bloc, leading to its boycott of the second-round of elections in December 2010. This move obviated any prospects for meaningful representation of opposition parties in parliament. As noted by Lust, this sequence of events contributed to the January 2011 protests in four ways. First, election manipulation increased regime antipathy; second, abolishing the MB from parliament motivated its willingness to join the opposition forces that led the 2011 protest movement; third, repression of the opposition galvanized coordination in the lead-up to the uprising; and fourth, downplaying their efforts heightened their opposition to the regime.¹⁹

Surveys showed that Egyptians desired political leaders with strong religious values, and they placed a high premium on the military.²⁰ Following Mubarak's downfall, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) led Egypt until the first post-Mubarak elections in November 2011. A referendum was held in March 2011 to change the presidential term from six to four years, with a two-term limit, and to limit the use of emergency law; the referendum passed with a 77 percent approval. The November election had a 51.85 percent voter turnout – the highest in Egypt's history – and was won by the MB, as many observers had predicted. The MB's candidate, Mohamed Morsi, was elected president in June 2012. However, the Morsi government was unable to address people's socioeconomic grievances and demands for meaningful participation and instead sought to enhance the MB power and authority, in part through concessions to the military. Khattab notes, "The Muslim Brotherhood failed to see that the revolution was all about the economy, job creation, and poverty alleviation" rather than "the decriminalizing of FGM, abolishing women's rights, and banning toys they deem offensive over the more pressing social and economic reforms or the worsening security situation."²¹ The MB's implementation and prioritization of policies reflected their ideal vision of an Islamic society and led to renewed protests. A pivotal moment of Morsi's presidency was the removal of senior SCAF members, including Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi (who led Egypt during the post-Mubarak transition), the military chief of staff Sami Anan and

¹⁹ Lust (2014): 227. ²⁰ Moaddel (2013). ²¹ Khattab (2012).

the heads of Egypt's army, navy, and air force in August 2012. Morsi also unilaterally amended the March 2011 constitution, giving his office executive and legislative control.²²

Under both the MB-dominated government and the military, protesters, Christians, and women fared badly. Egypt's SCAF perpetrated a massacre in October 2011 of Egyptian Christians who had been protesting outside the national TV company, an event that became known as the "Maspero massacre." Christians continued to suffer discrimination in the public sector and abuse from security services, courts, and fellow Egyptians. In April 2013, a deadly sectarian dispute led to clashes after a funeral at Cairo's Coptic cathedral, and riot police responding by joining in against the Christians.²³

Although democratically elected, the MB-dominated government's attempt to consolidate power posed a threat to the military. Under the guise of responding to renewed mass protests, the military ousted the government in a coup in July 2013. The MB reacted with its own protests, but these were brutally put down by the army and police. In what became known as the Rabaa massacre, over 1,000 MB sympathizers were killed in August.²⁴ MB supporters retaliated in the following days by attacking, looting, and burning dozens of churches and other Christian facilities across Egypt. "Christian and civil society leaders viewed the wave of violence as the result of MB retaliation and incitement."²⁵ General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who took control after Morsi, then resigned from the military to run in the 2014 presidential election, which he won. If the 2012 Islamist-backed constitution had placed greater restrictions on individual freedoms and gave unprecedented powers to religious institutions, then the 2014 constitution grants enormous powers to the military.

In 2019, a referendum was passed with an 88 percent approval rate that reinstated the Mubarak-era six-year presidential term and allowed al-Sisi to run for another term. The referendum expanded the military's role in politics through anti-terrorism laws and bolstered presidential control of the judiciary. It also created an upper chamber in parliament (the Senate) with 180 members, 60 directly appointed by the president and 120 directly elected; reduced the number of parliamentary seats in

²² Ross (2012). ²³ Kingsley (2013). ²⁴ Human Rights Watch (2014a).

²⁵ See Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Mass Attacks on Churches," www.hrw.org/news/2013/08/21/egypt-mass-attacks-churches#

the People's Assembly from 596 to 450; and allocated a 25 percent gender quota.²⁶ In a speech during a youth summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, al-Sisi lamented that the revolutionary success of early 2011, while well intended, "opened the gates of hell" and that the actions of the military in 2013 and the subsequent crackdown on dissidents and journalists had saved Egypt from enduring a similar fate as Syria, Yemen and Libya.²⁷ In 2019, the Trump administration, despite consternation from some senior diplomats, heeded al-Sisi's advice to designate the MB a foreign terrorist organization.

Egypt's problematic transition and authoritarian reversal has subverted political dissent. The 2013 *coup d'état* and repression of the MB, now deemed an existential threat to the state, enabled the authorities to reconstitute securitization as "normal politics."²⁸ The 2014 constitutional referendum and the elections that followed gave al-Sisi the overwhelming victory needed to legitimize the coup through an electoral façade sustained by American military aid.²⁹ Moreover, Egypt's geostrategic importance for Western powers – and the United States in particular as the largest official development assistance contributor – shielded the regime from bottom-up pressures to democratize. This is hardly new. As Brownlee notes, US-Egyptian relations had bolstered autocracy since the signing of the Camp David Accords; after the 9/11 attacks and during the "global war on terror," Egypt became a prime Arab state included under the US security umbrella.³⁰

Egypt's authoritarian reversal produced an even more repressive state. Since 2013, the Egyptian parliament has passed a series of stringent laws including a November 2013 law that essentially outlawed protests and demonstrations. A draconian non-governmental organization (NGO) law in 2017 effectively proscribes all non-governmental and civil society work that falls outside social development; it limits NGO funding sources without approval from the National Authority for Regulating International NGOs comprised of security, defense, and intelligence officials, and it allows courts to disband civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs without just cause.³¹ Similarly, parliament passed Law 107 that severely limits public protests and allows security forces to use lethal force to disperse protesters.³² Article 154 of the

²⁶ IFES, Egypt Election Guide. ²⁷ Associated Press (2018).

²⁸ Pratt and Rezk (2019). ²⁹ Grewal and Kureshi (2019): 1005.

³⁰ Brownlee (2012): 10–11. ³¹ Hamzawy (2016). ³² Ibid.

2014 constitution enables the president to declare a state of emergency – following parliamentary approval – for a period not exceeding three months, and al-Sisi extended its application multiple times in the aftermath of the 2017 bombing of two Coptic Christian churches.³³

We conclude that Egypt's transition was limited and distorted because the military remained at the helm following Mubarak's downfall, and because Islamist and secular parties were divided during the critical 2011–12 transitional phase. Moreover, governing through referenda as an instrument of subverting parliament and the judiciary unraveled Egypt's transition. This tumultuous transition and subsequent reversion enabled al-Sisi to learn from and adapt to threats posed by social forces in society by proscribing civic engagement through legislative measures that grant sweeping powers to the military and security forces. The government's investment in spyware and surveillance technology enables the regime to penetrate the public and private spheres and sustain an arguably deeper state than under Mubarak's era.³⁴

Tunisia

Tunisia's political landscape was always more diverse than Egypt's, given its long history of civic engagement, strong CSOs, and influential trade union. Tunisia's military was never as powerful and interventionist as Egypt's. The post-independence era led by President Habib Bourguiba introduced Western-inspired republican political and legal institutions, including a fairly liberal family law (see Chapter 5). Challengers were not tolerated, however, and both communists and Islamists were banned. Following Bourguiba's removal and Ben Ali's assumption of power, the 1990s saw advances in healthcare, educational attainment, welfare provisioning, civil society growth, and the expansion of political space. The façade of a multiparty system, however, ensured the dominance of Ben Ali's Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD) and multiple presidential terms for Ben Ali himself. Moreover, the authoritarian bargain began to fray in the new century, leading to economic decline, persistent unemployment, a wider income and development gap between the prosperous coastal regions and the interior, and increased cronyism. A rally against

³³ Egypt Today (2019). ³⁴ Shea (2020).

another term for Ben Ali took place in October 2004, bloggers began to air grievances, and an anti-censorship protest convened in 2005. In 2006–07, the Communist Workers' Party coalesced with Ennahda and pan-Arabists around the *Collectif 18 Octobre pour les droits et les libertés en Tunisie* against the Ben Ali regime, posting a declaration in 2007.³⁵ In 2008, workers, widows, and unemployed youth in the mining area of Gafsa clashed with police over jobs, working conditions, and exclusion. Finally, in December 2010, a tragedy involving an informally employed young man led to mass social protests in January 2011.

The Tunisian army did not interfere to suppress dissidents during the protest wave of protests. Professionalization, along with the distance between the ruling elite and the military made the armed forces less likely to use lethal force against peaceful protesters given the costs of doing so on the military's image and prestige.³⁶ The protests thus grew, leading to Ben's Ali's resignation and exile. Regime change was made possible by the resignation of key figures from Ben Ali's regime – including Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi – following pressure from opposition groups, and by the decisive decision of Armed Forces Chief of Staff Rachid Ammar to defy Ben Ali's orders to shoot protesters.³⁷ Tunisia's largest opposition, the MB-affiliated Ennahda Party which had been banned and its leader, Rached Ghannouchi, sent into exile since the late 1980s, returned to play a crucial role in Tunisia's transition. While numerous parties were formed and legalized following the January revolution, the one party that was not permitted to run in the October 2011 elections for the Constituent Assembly was Ben Ali's ruling party, the RCD.

Much of the literature on political parties in the Arab world considers them mere functions of authoritarian manipulation. And yet, in some countries, parties not tied to the ruling elites – including the

³⁵ The declaration is available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-hTPhszPJngNTdqXdx3TFBVRIZQWUtDazY2ZIFNdFFDUU5F/edit#page=43>. Legalized in 2011, the Communist Workers' Party has been led by Hama al-Hammami, a long-time activist married to human rights lawyer Radhia Nasraoui, and is part of the Popular Front (*Front Populaire*, or *Jebha Shaabia*), a key player in Tunisian politics. Mohamed al-Brahmi and Chokri Belaid, both of whom helped build the Popular Front, were assassinated within six months of each other in 2013, presumably by jihadists. The *Collectif* evaporated in 2010, and after 2011, the Popular Front vociferously opposed Ennahda's agenda.

³⁶ Bellin (2012): 133–4. ³⁷ Brownlee et al. (2015): 69, 126–8.

historic left-wing parties – were sustained over the years through networks of activists within the country and abroad. This was the case in Tunisia, where members of former communist and socialist parties, along with individuals tied to feminist, human rights, or liberal organizations, formed new parties and thus emerged as key organizers of or players within the new democratizing order. The transition phase developed organically, free from foreign interference and representative of CSOs, Islamists, and youth and women's groups. The historical presence and strength of civil society in Tunisia and its perseverance under the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes enabled a strong popular upsurge in 2011 (see Chapter 4). Akin to the transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America,³⁸ the history and strength of Tunisia's labor movement and the UGTT's professionalization, diversity, and links with wider CSOs made it a key player in the country's transition.

In the October 2011 elections for Tunisia's National Constituent Assembly, the Ennahda Party did not win a majority and thus had to rule in a coalition government with two secular parties, Ettakatol (Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties) and the Congress for the Republic, an arrangement called the "troika." The Constituent Assembly represented nearly all political factions in Tunisian society, but deliberations were bogged down in wrangling between secularists (liberals, leftists, and feminists) and Islamists over key constitutional clauses. The assassinations of two left-wing political figures led to protests over the murders and continued socioeconomic problems, and the summer of 2013 was marked by considerable contention between government and a newly formed opposition bloc. Following mediation by a group of four CSOs, the government agreed in early October 2013 to resign and make way for a caretaker government and new elections. The Constituent Assembly completed its work in January 2014, when Tunisia's new constitution was adopted. The constitution defines the competence of the Constitutional Court to include the "constitutionality" of draft laws – laws referred to it by lower courts, and the rules of procedure of the parliament, as well as various other questions. The court is to have twelve members total; the president, parliament, and the Supreme Judicial Council (the governing board of the judiciary) each appoints four members.³⁹

³⁸ See, e.g., O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986); Valenzuela (1989).

³⁹ Pickard (2015).

Unlike Egypt, the transition was smooth and devoid of military intervention. In the fall 2014 parliamentary and presidential elections, coalitions were formed to block another Ennahda victory, with left-wing and secular parties determined to intervene in institutional politics, assisted by some CSOs. Nidaa Tounes, a loose coalition of staunch secularists, took most of the parliamentary seats, and its leader, the veteran politician Beji Caid Essebsi, became Tunisia's first democratically elected president.

Essebsi's death in July 2019 led to an early election resulting in the victory of Kais Saied, a moderate constitutional law professor largely unknown to politics and with no political party affiliation; he became Tunisia's second democratically elected president, winning 73 percent of the votes with substantial support from young voters. Nidaa Tounes' 2014 political victory turned out to have been short-lived, as it won only four seats in parliament in 2019 while the Islamist Ennahda Party secured a majority 52 seats out of 217. Political disputes over government formation in 2014 and January 2020, along with continued economic difficulties, have increased citizens disillusionment with democracy, while the Islamist-secularist divide persists over key policy issues, including transitional justice, security sector reform, and coalition formation.⁴⁰

Why did Tunisia's military not follow Ben Ali's directive to quell the uprising? While the historical legacy of the military's formation – in Tunisia's case, by the civilian government led by Habib Bourguiba – offers *an* explanation for military defections from Ben Ali, new research sheds light on the ideological and strategic motivations underpinning such defections during political ruptures. Grewal's novel survey of Tunisian military officers regarding the 2017 Tataouine protests demonstrates that defection decisions are motivated by two key strategic calculations: identity and corporate interests. First, given that most lower-ranked officers are from the neglected interior, they sympathized more with protesters, increasing defection probability. Second, the decision by then president Essebsi to remove military representation from the National Security Council in January 2017 impeded the military's political influence in national security affairs and made officers less responsive to requests to quell dissidence.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Grewal and Hamid (2020): 2–3; 14. ⁴¹ Grewal (2019): 261.

Growing Pains or Stagnation?

A decade after it began its democratic transition, Tunisia faces serious challenges that could impede consolidation and durability. First, the socioeconomic conditions that fueled the uprising in 2010 remain unchanged, particularly as Tunisians experience inflation, high unemployment and even higher youth unemployment, weak economic growth and a downturn in its gas, tourism, and agricultural sectors.⁴² EU bilateral agreements with Tunisia and its integration into the EU's free trade and neighborhood programs (see Table 6.3), do benefit certain Tunisian industries (such as vegetable oils, fruits, and vegetables), but Tunisia's agricultural and textile industries (the key trade industries) compete with EU products that are imported under low tariffs. Such asymmetric trade relations impact an emerging economy's growth capacity in the near and distant future.⁴³ Meanwhile, the government has been grappling with a growing external debt, estimated in 2019 at some 80 percent of GDP.

If Tunisians had expected a robust social democracy to emerge from their political revolution and democratic transition, that was not attainable, leading to citizen disillusionment. In a December 2019 survey of Tunisians, 67% of respondents believed that the country was moving in the wrong direction; 33% noted that the economy, cost of living, and high prices were the most important issues facing the country, second to unemployment (28%); while 23% felt that improving living standards and employment should be the top two priorities for government.⁴⁴ Tunisia's neglected peripheral regions in particular suffer what Sadiki calls "the layers of multiple marginalization," hampering trust in government and confidence in the future.⁴⁵

Terrorist attacks on tourists and Tunisian soldiers after 2011, and the rise of jihadist organizations like Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST), have complicated legal and security sector reforms. Tunisia's anti-terrorism law of 2015 reinstated the death penalty for defendants found guilty of terrorism resulting in death or rape, defined terrorism in broad terms that can encompass disorder stemming from civic demonstrations, and expanded pre-charge detentions where suspects lack legal representation from six to fifteen days.⁴⁶ In 2019, the Truth

⁴² World Bank in Tunisia (2019). ⁴³ Grumiller et al. (2018).

⁴⁴ International Republican Institute (2019). ⁴⁵ Sadiki (2019).

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch (2015).

and Dignity Commission, established following the adoption of a Transitional Justice Law in 2013, concluded its investigation into human rights abuses spanning decades under Bourguiba and Ben Ali's rule. Members of the Commission complained that government authorities and the military had obstructed requests to review the archives of the presidency and that the Interior Ministry had failed to end impunity for rights perpetrators, leading Human Rights Watch to assert that "the culture of impunity is deeply entrenched in Tunisia and that the institutional and legal changes introduced after the revolution were insufficient to end torture and other egregious human rights violations."⁴⁷

Morocco

Morocco's gradualist path toward reform and democratization began with the 1997 electoral victory of the *Union Socialistes des Forces Populaires* (USFP) and the 1998 appointment of Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi, whose center-left coalition government included a progressive cabinet.⁴⁸ Other landmarks include the family law reform of 2004 that women's rights groups had advocated for nearly a dozen years, and the adoption of quotas to enhance women's parliamentary participation.⁴⁹ In 2004, King Mohammed VI initiated the Arab world's first Equity and Reconciliation Commission to address human rights abuses under his father's decades-long reign. Initial increased government spending sought to alleviate poverty and unemployment and increase the country's socioeconomic and human development.⁵⁰ Moreover, unlike Egypt and Tunisia, the largest opposition, the Islamist Party for Justice and Development (*parti de justice et développement*, or PJD), was not banned but rather participated in election rounds.

The emergence of the February 2011 protest movement spearheaded by the *mouvement 20 février* (M20F) led directly to constitutional amendments that were approved overwhelmingly in the July 2011 referendum. The amendments were intended to restrict the King's

⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch (2019).

⁴⁸ Rémy Leveau, "A democratic transition in Morocco?" *Le Monde Diplomatique* (December 1998), <https://mondediplo.com/1998/12/06maroc>

⁴⁹ Darhour and Dahlerup (2013); Moghadam and Gheytaichi (2010).

⁵⁰ Goldstein and Benchemsi (2013).

vast powers, although they fell far short of dissidents' goals to attain a political set-up that some called "the Spanish model." The amendments institutionalized the rights of women and the cultural rights of the Amazigh (Berber) ethnic group. The subsequent parliamentary election saw the participation of many political parties, including the historic ones such as Istiqlal, the USFP, and the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS). The electoral Islamic party, PJD, won 23 percent of seats and the right to name a prime minister; that prime minister, however, appointed only one woman to his cabinet. Morocco's initial transition followed a path similar to Tunisia's with the institutionalization of political and cultural changes called for by the M20F, albeit with concerns about security following the collapse of Libya and the rise of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).⁵¹

Morocco's political landscape has changed considerably since the early 1990s, when political dissent was not tolerated. Yet political and institutional reforms since 1998, and especially after 2011, have not yet produced deep or extensive change. Unlike Tunisia's post-Ben Ali constitutional drafting commission that included broad stakeholders in society, including women, Islamists, trade union leaders, and CSOs, Morocco's constitutional drafting commission and accompanying mechanism were headed by Abdellatif Menouni and Mohammed Moatassim, both advisors to the King.⁵² The new constitution did make progress by defining Morocco as a Muslim state, in comparison to other regional constitutions that enshrine Sharia law as the source of legislation. The King is mandated to nominate a prime minister from the largest winning party, who presides over cabinet meetings; and the legislative power of parliament is expanded. No party can win an outright majority as parties are required to form a governing coalition with other blocs. Such changes notwithstanding, the King retains vast powers, presiding over key institutions: the Superior Council of the Ulema (Article 41), the Council of Ministers (Article 48), Superior Council of Security (Article 54), the Superior Council of the Judicial Power (Article 56).⁵³ Article 96 allows the King to dissolve parliament following consultations with constitutional and legislative chambers of government. Moreover, the King's constitutional

⁵¹ Maddy-Weitzman (2012); Ottaway (2011). ⁵² Ottaway (2011).

⁵³ Constitution Project, Morocco's Constitution of 2011.

power over foreign policy decisions “minimize the agency of the government and preserve the preponderance of the Palace and its close entourage in matters of foreign policy.”⁵⁴ For better or for worse, the monarchy presents itself as a mediating force between the country’s contending political and social forces – Islamist, secular, women’s rights advocates, youth groups, CSOs.

Nor has there been progress in economic development: vast sections of the country and its population experience poverty, infrastructural underdevelopment, and uneven access to healthcare. A growing external debt – estimated at 65 percent of GDP in 2019 – hampers the government’s ability to improve conditions. These problems generated the Hirak movement’s mobilization in 2017 in the country’s historically disenfranchised Rif region, as well as protests by teachers and health workers for increased investments in public services.⁵⁵ If Egypt reversed its democratic transition and returned to authoritarianism and Morocco’s democratization has stalled, Tunisia’s democratic transition continues with regular presidential and parliamentary elections, special commissions staffed by members of civil society and political society, and laws that enshrine women’s rights. Yet, as noted, socioeconomic stagnation evinced by rising youth unemployment, poor economic performance, and a growing external debt poses a challenge to democratic stability and sustainability.

Bahrain

Bahrain’s political and institutional development is embedded in al-Khalifa’s Sunni-patronage network. Following its independence in 1971 from Britain, as Lawson explains, Sheikh Isa embarked upon political reforms that led to the formation of a draft constitution in 1972 which defined the terms for the country’s first elections for a national assembly in 1973. Although the December 1973 election drew wide support from various sociopolitical groups, including Islamists, liberals, and independent leftists, the National Assembly was strictly tasked with advising and consenting to laws initiated in the unelected cabinet rather than proposing legislation, and the constitution allotted the King veto powers to dissolve parliament through a royal decree. The election produced three main

⁵⁴ Abouzzohour and Tomé-Alonso (2019): 446.

⁵⁵ Salime (2019); Wolf (2019).

coalitions: the People's Bloc advocated for traditional labor and unionization, participation in economic policymaking and higher wages; the Religious Bloc likewise supported labor reforms but advocated for religious restrictions on the licensing of youth clubs and organizations, sale of alcohol, and gender relations in public spaces; and the Independents advocated for an unregulated market economy, drawing support from Bahrain's various social classes. Breaching its constitutional mandate, the National Assembly began debating two key public policy issues – the creation of a general labor law to allow trade unions to organize and implement quotas on foreign workers, and public security ordinances which resulted in political deadlocks between key coalition blocs and the dissolution of the assembly by the Emir in 1975.⁵⁶ The dismantling of the legislature from 1975 until King Isa's death in 1999 produced a period of absolute rule governed by emergency law, resulting in mass uprisings mostly by the country's excluded Shi'a majority from 1994–9.

In line with hereditary succession, King Isa's son Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa succeeded his father upon his death in 1999. Promising reforms and reconciliation with the Shi'a community, King Hamad promulgated the National Action Charter in 2001 to address political grievances and institute reforms by reinstating the National Assembly, devising a new constitution, and amending the repressive State Security Law to disband the country's State Security Courts. Political prisoners who had been arrested during the uprisings of the 1990s were released and a general amnesty for political exiles was issued.⁵⁷ Bahrain became a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral legislature comprised of a forty-person elected Council of Representatives (*majlis al-nuwab*) and a forty-person Consultative Council (*majlis al-shura*) appointed by the King. The equal distribution of elected and appointed members of parliament reflected the King's unconstrained power. The constitution was presented unilaterally by the King without public consultation and was approved in a national reform by 98 percent. The constitution gives the King unrestricted powers to form government and overrule legislation and constitutional amendments.⁵⁸ Article 33 gives the King absolute powers to appoint and dissolve ministers and government by royal decree, to chair the judicial council and appoint judges. Article 35 allows the King to unilaterally amend the constitution and propose and ratify laws. Article 42 stipulates that the King orders elections, convenes the National Assembly by a royal order,

⁵⁶ See Lawson (1989): 89–91. ⁵⁷ Gengler (2015): 43. ⁵⁸ Katzman (2014).

and has the absolute power to dissolve the Assembly by a decree so long as he provides a justification.⁵⁹

Political parties are formally banned but political associations can exist as per Law No. 14 of 2002 on the Exercise of Political Rights. Since then, laws and royal decrees curtail political participation by banning and limiting opposition movements and organizations. Such laws and decrees appear to be targeted mainly at the Shi'a political associations, such as the al-Wefaq Party, founded in 2001 by exiled Bahraini Shi'as upon their return following the general amnesty. As Gengler explains, electoral districts were altered in 2002, creating 40 highly gerrymandered districts with 500–17,000 registered voters to widen the electoral distribution in Sunni areas while minimizing Shi'a districts. Consequently, whereas 6 members of parliament represented 16,000 voters in the Sunni-dominated southern provinces, the predominantly Shi'a northern provinces were allocated nine representatives for 79,000 voters.⁶⁰

As with previous anti-regime protests, institutional constraints galvanized group mobilization against the state prior to and following the signing of the National Action Charter. The selective reforms of the early 2000s produced subsequent electoral victories for the country's largest political party and opposition bloc,⁶¹ the Shi'a al-Wefaq party in the 2006 and 2010 general elections to the National Assembly. The predominance of the al-Wefaq in parliament posed a political and national security dilemma for the monarchy and Sunni political parties.

Stalled reforms and the absence of legislative independence coupled with social and economic decline, particularly among the country's Shi'a majority, fueled mass mobilization against the regime culminating in Bahrain's Day of Rage on February 14, 2011. The uprising was led by the Shi'a majority, but they were joined by Bahraini Sunnis, particularly those from the lower socioeconomic strata, and the slogans reflected cross-sectarian solidarity.⁶² The regime, however, branded it as Iran-influenced. A dialogue initiative proposed by the crown prince ended after three days, when the Saudi-led Peninsula Shield Forces deployed under the Gulf Cooperation Council Joint Defense Treaties entered Bahrain on March 14, 2011, violently repressing the protest. As Fadel observes: "GCC security and military intervention [worked] in favor of

⁵⁹ Constitution Project, Bahrain's Constitution of 2002.

⁶⁰ Gengler (2015): 44. ⁶¹ Wikileaks (2008). ⁶² Kerr and Jones (2011).

the regime, and the crisis became a regional issue, with internal forces overlapping with external actors in determining the path of change.”⁶³

Assisted by neighboring Saudi Arabia, the regime’s violent crackdown on the protesters ended its façade of political reform. Nonetheless, to assuage grievances, the monarchy announced a grant of \$2,650 for each Bahraini family on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the National Action Charter of 2001. It also promised increased social spending, the release of Shi’a political prisoners, and the establishment of the National Dialogue and Bahrain’s Independent Commission of Inquiry.⁶⁴ However, the failure to establish legislative independence, end regime interference and electoral gerrymandering, and ensure free and fair elections and a competitive electoral field led to Shi’a and other opposition boycotts of the 2014 elections.⁶⁵ To marginalize certain dissidents and challengers and prevent them from running for office, the 2002 Electoral Law No. 14 was amended in 2018. It bars from office anyone with a criminal record or with a history of serving jail time for more than six months, even if a pardon was issued; the ban extends to any members of a banned political society or organization. Again, this appears to be targeted primarily at Shi’a dissidents.⁶⁶ Like several other GCC countries, Bahrain amended its nationality and anti-terrorism laws to make it much easier to revoke nationality, targeting dissidents. As Zahra Babar writes, such a move embraces the idea that citizenship should be contingent on political beliefs and on the state’s security calculations, effectively “securitizing” citizenship.⁶⁷ In the run-up to the 2018 election, the government banned all opposition political parties, including the al-Wefaq and the secular-left National Democratic Action Society (Wa’ad), and forcibly closed the country’s only independent newspaper, al-Wasat, in 2017.⁶⁸ This move demonstrates the consistent and systematic constriction of political rights and freedoms since the uprising in 2011.

The Bahraini regime’s lack of legitimacy among the majority Shi’a population could have made it collapse in the face of the mass protests of

⁶³ Fadel (2019): 28. ⁶⁴ Al Jazeera (2011a). ⁶⁵ Gengler (2014).

⁶⁶ Kingdom of Bahrain. “Qanoon rqam (٣٥) al-sana ٢٠١٨: beita’del al-mada al-thalitha min al-marsoom b’qanoon rqam (١٤) al-sana (٢٠٠٢) b’sha’n m’bashra al-huqooq al-syasa” (Law No. [25] year 2018: Amending Article 3 of Law No. [14] year [2002] Regarding the Political Rights Directive).

⁶⁷ Babar (2017); see also *The Economist* (2016, 2018).

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch (2018a).

2011. Crucial to the regime's survival, however, is its position in the regional and international system. While we concur with analyses that stress Bahrain's natural resources as *a factor* in sustaining the ruling monarchy's Sunni-patronage networks, we posit that regime survival markedly rests with its geopolitical and geostrategic significance for neighboring GCC states and the USA as host to the Navy's Fifth Fleet. In revisiting data cited in Brownlee et al. regarding Bahrain's arms imports in comparison to wealthier GCC states, and the study by Grimmett, we see that Bahrain's arms import values are relatively modest, with arms transfer figure agreements totaling \$400 million from 2002–05 and \$400 million from 2006–09.⁶⁹ A closer comparative scrutiny of data on oil and gas rents, GDP per capita, and arms imports (as seen in Table 3.3) reveals that Bahrain lags behind all GCC states in oil and gas rents and arms imports but ranks higher on GDP per capita in comparison to Oman and Saudi Arabia given Bahrain's smaller population size. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show that while Bahrain lags behind other GCC states in arms import values from 2000–18, it is the largest recipient of US military aid, indicating the strategic and stabilizing force that is provided by the US. Lower rents, scant oil wealth, and lower arms imports should have made the regime more vulnerable to domestic shocks such as mass protests – were it not for the Saudi intervention and US support for the ruling monarchy (see also Chapter 6).

Table 3.3 *GCC military expenditure and sources of rents, 2017*

Country	Oil rents	Gas rents	Military expenditure	GDP per capita
Bahrain	2.0	1.5	4.389	\$23,715
Kuwait	36.6	0.5	5.635	\$29,759
Oman	21.8	1.6	9.56	\$15,130
Qatar	14.2	3.7	1.5 (2010)	\$61,264
Saudi Arabia	23.1	0.6	10.251	\$20,803
United Arab Emirates	13.1	0.6	5.076 (2014)	\$39,811

Note: Oil rents, gas rents, and military expenditure are % GDP.

Source: World Bank.

⁶⁹ Grimmett (2010): 43–4. See also Brownlee et al. (2014): 54.

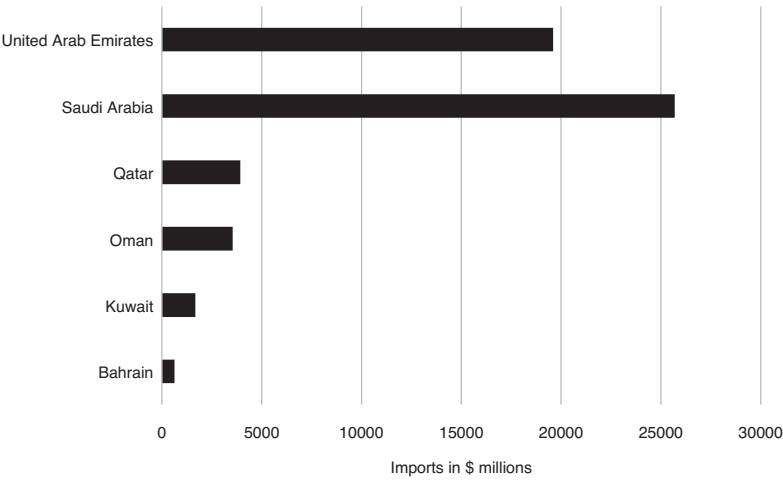


Figure 3.3 Arms imports of GCC states, 2000–18.
Source: SIPRI. Arms imports are Trend Value Indicators measured in \$ millions.

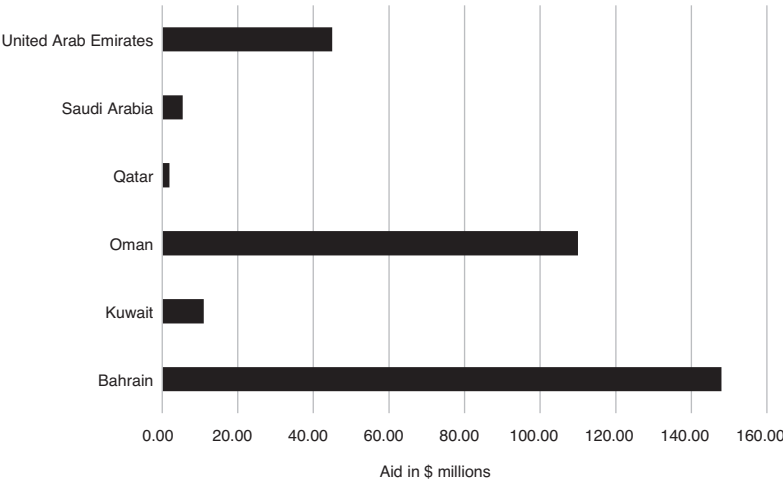


Figure 3.4 US military aid to GCC states, 2008–18.
Source: USAID.

Oil revenues do shape the regime’s allocation and distribution of rents among its cadre of Sunni tribal elites. We agree with Gengler who notes that the practice “favors alliances based on outwardly

observable, ascriptive social categories” manifested by political, economic, and military support that helps sustains its selective rentier model.⁷⁰ However, this does not fully explain the Bahraini regime’s survival given its more modest capabilities when compared with the financial and coercive capabilities of its wealthier Arab Gulf neighbors. What sustains the regime’s survival amid declining oil wealth is its geostrategic relevance for neighboring states as a bulwark against presumed Iranian expansion in the Gulf and the USA as its largest international backer. Shielded by the coercive capabilities of its neighbors and the military capacity of its international patron by the presence of the Fifth Fleet, the Bahraini monarchical regime is protected from disaffected citizens and prevented from reforming its political institutions.

Libya

Following Libya’s independence, the banning of political parties by King Idris coupled with the discovery of oil in 1959 consolidated the regime’s grip on power. Federalism was abolished in favor of a unitary state by the King in 1963 to bolster territorial control over the emergent rentier state and to mitigate tensions between the center and the periphery.⁷¹ Libya’s 1969 coup, led by twenty-seven-year-old Muammar al-Qaddafi and a group of military officers of the Libyan Free Unionist Officers’ Movement, overthrew the personalist rule of King Idris. However, both regimes depended heavily on tribal affiliations and loyalties to maintain authority rather than on state and political institutions as vehicles for economic distribution and conflict resolution.⁷² Emerging as the guardian of the revolution and elected as the Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council modeled after Egypt’s revolutionary command, Qaddafi quelled dissidence and centralized power through oil nationalization, the expulsion of foreign bases, and an ideology combining Islam, anti-imperialism, and pan-Arabism.⁷³

Restructuring the political system, Qaddafi instituted “the state of the masses,” or the *Great Socialist People’s Libyan Arab Jamahiriya*, ostensibly a truer version of democracy. Following an attempted coup

⁷⁰ Gengler (2015): 30–2. See also Human Rights Watch (2013a).

⁷¹ Vandewalle (2006): 61. ⁷² Anderson (1990): 288–9.

⁷³ Hinnebusch (1984): 62; Vandewalle (2006): 61.

in August 1975, Qaddafi sought to remake the Libyan state by subverting the power of the Revolutionary Command Council that had brought him to power. Eschewing representative democracy, Qaddafi penned *The Green Book* in 1975 outlining his vision of a society governed by an ostensibly direct democracy of a loosely structured mass assembly known as the General People's Congress; this was ruled by committees and was devoid of any coherent or cohesive formal institutional structures other than that of "people managing their own affairs without state institutions."⁷⁴ From 1977 to 2011, the country was governed by a four-tiered assembly system of "popular" or "people's" assemblies, though in fact the regime controlled candidate selection and decision-making at every level. Such control may have led to the decline in attendance rates in the Basic Popular Committee, from their highest at 70 percent in 1982 to 27 percent in 1989 and just 10 percent in 1997.⁷⁵

By the new century, Libya was devoid of representative political institutions and governed largely through 40,000 members of the Revolutionary Committees and another 40,000 soldiers and guards of the *jamahiriya*.⁷⁶ As the largest oil-producing state in North Africa, oil rents sustained Qaddafi's patronage network. Not unlike Libya under King Idris, oil and its strategic distribution enabled Qaddafi to buy tribal alliances and contain dissidence producing a highly fragmented and hollowed-out state structure built around four overlapping power structures: Qaddafi's family, his inner circle, the tribal system, and the formal "structure of the masses."⁷⁷ Effectively, the erosion of the bureaucratic and institutional structures of the state, and of the technocrats governing them, sustained Qaddafi's unconstrained access to state power. Oil and its distribution allowed Qaddafi to maintain a patronage system reliant on kin, regional, and tribal alliances that fractured state and society and prevented political alliances, economic associations, and national organizations.⁷⁸

Inspired by events in neighboring Tunisia, protests erupted in Benghazi, Libya's second largest city, where citizens harbored deep animosity toward the central government in Tripoli owing to unemployment and underdevelopment. Mobilizing elite units commanded by Qaddafi's sons and loyal forces, including the 2,500-man Islamic Pan-African Brigade

⁷⁴ Vandewalle (1998): 98. ⁷⁵ Al-Werfalli (2011). ⁷⁶ Kadlec (2014).

⁷⁷ Paoletti (2011): 316. ⁷⁸ Anderson (2011).

made of fighters from Chad, Sudan, and Niger, Libya's security forces used live ammunition on protesters.⁷⁹ Because of the decades-long underfunding of the national armed forces as a coup-proofing tactic, however, the Libyan army splintered into pro-protester and pro-regime camps.⁸⁰ Under the guise of a humanitarian intervention to prevent mass atrocities against the Libyan people, the UN Security Council invoked the newly crafted Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. This resulted in Qaddafi's toppling in October of 2011 by various rebel factions who received aerial and ground military support from regional and international powers. The National Transitional Council (NTC) governed for a period of ten months and was dismantled following elections in 2012, replaced with the General National Congress (GNC) as the parliamentary body. Under international pressure, NTC agreed to include women and ethnic minorities in the sixty-member Constitutional Drafting Assembly but stagnation followed due to the weakness of the central government relative to the strength of armed militia.⁸¹

Qaddafi's state capture and his dismantling of institutions and bureaucratic structures in favor of highly personalized rule sustained by patronage and co-optation posed a critical challenge for post-2011 state-building. This deficient institutional reality was not considered by the Western and regional forces who were bent on regime change. From the onset, disagreements over the nature of government, federalism, the role of Islam, and militia integration and disarmament within the NTC fractured nascent attempts at post-Qaddafi state-building.⁸² Two key elections held in 2012 and 2014 failed to create a unified Libyan government. The 2012 election produced a highly competitive political arena featuring 142 registered political parties boasting 1,206 eligible candidates with another 2,501 independent candidates divided along Islamist and national-secularist lines vying for the 200 member assembly.⁸³ The secular National Forces Alliance coalition – comprised of 58 political organizations, 236 NGOs and 280 Independents – won the majority with 39 seats followed by the MB-aligned Justice and Development Party winning 19 seats out of the 80 seats assigned to political parties with another 120 seats for Independent candidates with a 60 percent voter turnout.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Gelvin (2012): 101. ⁸⁰ ICG (2011).

⁸¹ Human Rights Watch, Libya, (2014b). ⁸² Chivvis (2014): 170–1.

⁸³ Wehrey (2012). ⁸⁴ The Carter Center (2012).

The 2014 election sought to replace the GNC with the House of Representatives (HoR) as the main legislative body tasked with government formation and drafting a new constitution. Marred by violence and the proliferation of militias, the election produced a turnout of just 18 percent, where candidates were allowed to run as Independents only, as stipulated in Libya's Law No. 10 of 2014.⁸⁵ The election gave secular and federalist candidates a lead over Islamists and an agreement to move the legislative body from Tripoli to Benghazi to placate regional divisions in the lead-up to the formation of a unity government. After Islamists contested the electoral results, the Libyan Supreme Court, by some observers under duress from militants, ruled in favor of Islamist groups and reinstated the GNC in July 2014, which further fractured an already fragile political environment. In August 2014, the head of the UN Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) ruled in favor of the HoR (which had been operating in Tobruk due to mounting insecurity in Benghazi) as the sole legitimate legislative body in Libya and warned against "the dangers of creating parallel political institutions and processes, which can only contribute to further division and polarization."⁸⁶

Amid escalating violence, the UNSMIL's political dialogue negotiations in 2015 with the HoR and members of the GNC led to the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement on December 17, 2015 in Skhirat, Morocco resulting in the creation of the Government of National Accord (GNA).⁸⁷ The GNA constituted the first attempt to devise the basic structures and institutions of the state. However, continued fighting, the proliferation of militias, contention over control of the country's oil reserves, tribal and regional divisions, and foreign interference impeded government formation. In December 2017, renegade General Khalifa Haftar operating in the East declared the UN-recognized and backed GNA in Tripoli null and void, producing two centers of power. In January 2019, Haftar's Libyan National Army began advancing westward in an attempt to take over Tripoli and abolish the UN backed government, producing a civil war supported by foreign powers with Italy, Turkey, Qatar, the USA, UN, and EU lending support to the internationally recognized government in

⁸⁵ Al-mutamar al-watani al-'am al-Libya (2014). ⁸⁶ UNSMIL (2014).

⁸⁷ UNSMIL (2015).

Tripoli led by Fayeze Sarraj and the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, France, and Russia backing Field Marshall Haftar and his Libyan National Army.⁸⁸

As Africa's largest oil producer with the highest GDP per capita prior to 2011, Libya has experienced a civil war that has devastated its oil infrastructure and production capacity, fractured its central bank due to disputes over the distribution of state revenues from oil sales, and impeded the central government's ability to pay state employees.⁸⁹ Attempts to broker a ceasefire by the UN and EU powers – including the promising January 2020 Berlin Conference on Libya – led to a commitment by foreign actors to refrain from intervening in Libya's civil war. The following month, the UN Security Council agreed, with fourteen members in favor and Russia abstaining.⁹⁰

In summary, Libya's historically weak state and political institutions prevented post-Qaddafi attempts at state-building. Increased insecurity stemming from regional and tribal divisions, Islamism, the proliferation of militias, and external intervention prevented a smooth and peaceful transition to democracy. Instead, Libya became a divided and lawless state and a conduit for people-smuggling.

Syria

Syria's institutional development experienced various phases prior to and following the French Mandate; an example is the 1950 constitution which sought to limit and regulate the exercise of executive power.⁹¹ In some ways, the strength of Syria's institutional and bureaucratic composition since the twentieth century mirrors that of Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia examined in this book. In 1963, a group of revolutionary army officers led a coup inspired by the left-leaning Arab nationalist and socialist ideology of Ba'thism. Various intraparty coups between 1963 and 1970 culminated in the rise to power of Hafez al-Assad, whose election as president of the Revolutionary Command Council in 1971 consolidated the Ba'th Party.⁹² To control a divided society with competing bases of power, Hafez al-Assad relied on a decentralized political system dependent on the strategic incorporation of communal elites into key institutions – the military, ruling party, and

⁸⁸ Weise (2020). ⁸⁹ ICG (2019). ⁹⁰ UN Security Council (2020).

⁹¹ Atassi (2018): 6–7. ⁹² Hinnebusch (2014).

security services, which gave elites a say in the ruling coalition.⁹³ As Heydemann notes, Ba‘thist state capture and regime survival depended on the deployment of populist authoritarianism through state structures, institutions, and choices of political actors to transform social interactions and shape regime consolidation.⁹⁴ By cementing institutional and structural control of the state and its governing apparatuses, the regime produced what Wedeen calls the “rituals of obedience” that infused regime rhetoric to enforce compliance.⁹⁵ Hafez al-Assad’s intraparty coup enabled him to construct a “presidential monarchy,” allowing the regime to transfer power through hereditary succession, making Syria the only non-monarchical system in the MENA to have succeeded in doing so.⁹⁶ Secularization and co-optation of elites belonging to various social, economic, religious, and political bases guaranteed the regime’s survival.⁹⁷

Although registered political parties theoretically existed, they had to be members of the National Progressive Front, led by the Ba‘th Party, thus obviating political competition.⁹⁸ The largest threat to the regime came from Sunni Islamists culminating in an armed insurrection between 1979 and 1982 led by the MB-dominated Fighting Vanguard. Its crushing defeat in Hama in 1982 and the massacre of an estimated ten thousand to twenty thousand people made it a watershed moment seared in the historic memory of anti-regime Syrians, especially Islamists.

Bashar al-Assad assumed power following his father’s death in 2000 and launched reform and political liberalization attempts through the short-lived Damascus Spring – a political opening which saw a brief liberalization of civil society and limited political contestation. The subsequent clampdown may have been precipitated by US preparations for the invasion of Iraq. Like political parties, NGOs are prohibited or strictly monitored for any potential foreign influence through funding. Laws 93/1958 and 1330/1958 permit associations that do not engage in political activity, but such associations act as conduits for the

⁹³ Stacher (2012): 13. ⁹⁴ Heydemann (1999): 8. ⁹⁵ Wedeen (2015): 6.

⁹⁶ Pierret (2017): 51. Hosni Mubarak, Muammar Qaddafi, and Saddam Hussein likewise had intended to transfer power to their sons, but never succeeded in doing so. Syria is thus the only non-hereditary monarchy in the MENA to have successfully pursued hereditary succession.

⁹⁷ Leverett (2005): 25. ⁹⁸ UNDPADM (2004): 9–10.

regime's distribution of patronage and influence of elites within the state's ruling coalition.⁹⁹ The Damascus Declaration (DD) of 2005, signed by more than 250 major opposition groups, including Islamists, secular groups, Arabs, and Kurds, called for political liberalization given that the party had become an "authoritarian, totalitarian, and cliquish regime" that fractured the country's social fabric, noting that "the present moment calls for a courageous and responsible national stand" with reforms that are "peaceful, gradual, founded on accord, and based on dialogue and recognition of the other."¹⁰⁰ The regime's suppression of the DD and activists led to an exodus of political dissidents from the country, some of whom began operating in exile, increasingly lobbying their respective foreign governments on behalf of their members in Syria.¹⁰¹

Inspired by the prodemocracy protests in Tunisia and Egypt and fueled by economic stagnation, Syrians dissidents took to the streets in March 2011 demanding economic and political reform. Beginning in the southern city of Daraa, the protests spread quickly to the city of Hama and Aleppo. DD members aided in the formation of a Syrian opposition in 2011, including the Syrian National Council (Ankara), the National Salvation Council (Istanbul), the National Transition Council (Ankara and Syria), and the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change.¹⁰² The regime's response oscillated between repression and concessions, and violence also was used by protesters, leading to estimates of some 5,000 deaths by December 2011 and the Arab League's unprecedented move to formally suspend Syria's membership. The Arab League tried to mediate between the regime and the armed rebels but did not succeed. By this time, numerous Western and regional states were supporting the rebels, convinced that the regime would fall, and various mediation and peace plans failed because the Syrian side would not accept the condition that Assad leave the scene and because the opposition was convinced of victory. The Syrian regime's domestic base and patronage networks, however, proved more resilient, especially after external support from Russia, Iran, and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

The splintering of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the growing influence of Islamists, including al-Qaeda aligned groups within the

⁹⁹ Stacher (2012): 136–7. ¹⁰⁰ Landis (2005). ¹⁰¹ Pace and Landis (2009).

¹⁰² Wikileaks (2011d).

Sunni-Arab opposition, along with external support for the largely Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), fractured the opposition and drastically altered the uprising's trajectory. Syria's historically divided opposition failed to coalesce into a cohesive political movement. Whereas the National Coordination Committee was open to negotiating with the regime if Syrian security forces retreated from the towns they were occupying, the Europe- and Turkey-based Syrian National Council rejected any discussions with Assad.¹⁰³ This opened the door to the occupation of parts of Syria by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS/ISIL/IS/Daesh), with many foreign fighters arriving through the border with Turkey.

The regime's crackdown on violent opposition accompanied an attempt at political and institutional reforms. The regime lifted the 1963 emergency law and made constitutional amendments that set presidential limits to two seven-year terms and allowed contested presidential elections. Article 8 of the 2012 constitution permitted licensed political parties to contest elections and removed the Ba'th Party as the leading party of the state, and banned discrimination based on gender, race, or color. It also prohibited political parties formed on the basis of religion, sect, tribe, region, class, or profession, intended to subvert Islamist and Kurdish parties from dominating the opposition.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, although Article 13 restructured the Ba'thist socialist economy to one based on public and private enterprises, the Ba'th party remained a gatekeeper of the country's socioeconomic development. In the 2014 election, the Supreme Constitutional Court approved three candidates, with Assad eventually securing 88.7 percent of the vote, while Hassan al-Nouri, who previously served as Minister of State for Administrative Development Affairs from 2000–02, won 4.3 percent and Maher Abdul-Hafiz Hajjar, a member of the Syrian Communist Party, secured 3.2 percent of the vote.¹⁰⁵ In 2019, President al-Assad promised a competitive electoral field in the 2021 election.¹⁰⁶ This would appear difficult to achieve, however, given the continued battle against remaining ISIS fighters, and given that some 10 million Syrians have been displaced internally or fled to neighboring countries and Europe.

¹⁰³ Brownlee et al. (2014): 93.

¹⁰⁴ Constitutional Project, Syrian Arab Republic's Constitution of 2012.

¹⁰⁵ IFES, Syria Election Guide. ¹⁰⁶ Reuters (2019).

The deteriorating security situation in Syria led to the passage of anti-terrorism laws. Counterterrorism Laws No. 19 of July 2012 and No. 22 establishing the new Counterterrorism Court give the regime sweeping powers to prosecute anyone suspected of terrorist activity against the state, including political dissidents.¹⁰⁷ As with Decree 66 of 2012, Law No. 10 of April 2018 enables the government to confiscate vacant property in anti-government territories.¹⁰⁸

The strength of the state notwithstanding, Syria lacked the institutional, societal, and economic preconditions necessary for democratization, but major political reforms arguably could have been implemented in the absence of significant external intervention. A fragmented opposition and external meddling, both regional and international, fueled regime repression, fractured the 2011 uprising, opened the way for ISIS consolidation, generated the massive Syrian migration wave, and produced a protracted and internationalized civil war.

Yemen

As the poorest MENA country, Yemen emerged in 1990 following the merger of the secular and socialist South Yemen (People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, PDRY) with the conservative and Saudi-backed North Yemen (the Yemen Arab Republic, YAR) and with Field Marshal Ali Abdullah Saleh, president of YAR since 1978, staying on as president of the unified republic. The 1993 elections gave Saleh's party, the General People's Congress, substantial seats in parliament but fell short of winning a majority while the northern-based Islamist Yemeni Reform Gathering (*Islah*) narrowly beat the southern-based Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), all of which created a three-party government divided along ideational and territorial lines.¹⁰⁹ In the 1994 civil war, northern troops attacked southern territories, which weakened the YSP as a contending political force. Consequently, Saleh's Congress and *Islah* formed a new coalition government without the socialists; they amended the constitution to introduce Sharia law as the principal source of legislation and expanded the powers of the executive. Saleh's regime relied on the co-optation of tribal and political elites and Saudi aid. Subsequent elections in 1999 and 2006 reinstituted Saleh's rule and expanded the neopatrimonial system to

¹⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch (2013b). ¹⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch (2018b).

¹⁰⁹ Dresch (2000); Phillips (2017).

maintain control of key financial and military sectors of the state by family and tribal associates.¹¹⁰ As seen in Figure 3.2 (see also Chapter 6), Yemen's significance for the global war on terror compelled it to allocate a higher percentage of government spending on the military than on socio-economic development, given that it was, and remains, the poorest country in the region. Indeed, as Corstange notes, state development lagged markedly in tribal regions, and most notably, in the Zaydi Shi'a tribal areas which are the poorest, least developed and most lawless in the country. The absence of development and political integration of the Zaydi Shi'as, along with reduction of patronage payoffs due to the decline of oil resources, propelled tribal leaders to revolt against the state in 2011.¹¹¹ Thus, as in Libya following Qaddafi's overthrow, Saleh's ouster created a political vacuum as various factions competed for control supported by regional actors seeking influence in Yemen's transition.

As was seen in Figure 1.2, since 1990 Yemen has experienced some of the largest protest movements in the MENA stemming from regional and political conflict prior and following unification. In line with this historical trajectory, Yemenis took to the streets in early 2011 calling for the removal of President Saleh and his regime, resulting in the violent suppression of protesters by state security forces. From the onset, youth activists voiced concerns about the hijacking of the uprising by rival rebel groups and militia.¹¹² The March 18, 2011 killing of fifty unarmed demonstrators in Sana'a by Saleh supporters led to military defections of notable Saleh allies such as Ali Mohsen (driven out due to Saleh's intentions to elevate his son, Ahmed Saleh, to governance). Such allies then joined a peculiar coalition of prominent Salafists and the Joint Meeting Parties, which was a five party alliance between Islah, the YSP, the Nasserist Popular Union Party, and two Zaydi parties.¹¹³ In November 2011, Saleh agreed to resign in a negotiated settlement brokered by the GCC and UN Security Council

¹¹⁰ Phillips (2017).

¹¹¹ Corstange (2016): 3. The Houthi movement, also known as *Ansar Allah* (Partisans of God), is a Zaydi Shi'a revivalist insurgent movement and followers of Zayd ibn Ali, the grandson of Hussein, son of Ali (the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed). A Zaydi imamate/state was founded in Northern Yemen in 893 AD, lasting until the republican revolution of 1962. The Houthi movement was founded in northern Yemen in 2004 producing six wars until 2010 including Saudi interventions in support of Saleh to contain what it perceived a Shi'a and Iranian threat within Yemen. See Sharp (2019): 3.

¹¹² Al Jazeera (2011b); Lynch (2012): 155. ¹¹³ Alley (2013): 74.

Resolution 2051 that gave him immunity from prosecution and relinquished power to vice president Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi during a transitional period prior to elections in February 2012. Hadi's sole candidacy was supported by the ruling party and the Yemeni opposition but opposed by the Houthis. Saleh's ouster represented the third case of the Arab uprisings in which the autocrat was toppled following mass protests. (We exclude the foreign-imposed regime change in Libya which secured rebel victory.) Unlike Tunisia and Egypt, however, Yemen's transition failed to produce a change in leadership as members of the *ancien régime* commanded the critical transition phase.

A National Dialogue Conference attended by 565 Yemeni delegates representing different social groups took place throughout 2013 for a period of ten months, concluding in late January 2014.¹¹⁴ But deep-seated issues, particularly over southern Yemen, affected its efficacy as a peace-building mechanism.¹¹⁵ Within months of its conclusion, unresolved economic, political, and constitutional issues between Yemen's Houthis, and lack of support from southern secessionists who had been battling growing Islamic extremists and MB factions in the north, resulted in new protests demanding reform from Hadi's government amid political, institutional, and economic stagnation. In late 2014, Houthi militants took over the capital Sana'a, and in early 2015 Aden in the south, leading to Hadi's capture and subsequent escape to Saudi Arabia, prompting the latter to launch a coalition that ignited the 2015 civil war. The Houthis' capture of the strategic port city of Houdaida prompted Saudi Arabia and the UAE to launch "Operation Golden Victory" in 2018, producing a dire humanitarian crisis and siege of the city. Attempts by the UN to broker a peace deal culminated in the Stockholm Agreement in December 2018 in Sweden with three core mandates: a cease-fire, a prisoner swap, and a statement of understanding to form a committee to discuss the war-torn city of Taiz.¹¹⁶ As of 2020, the Agreement had yet to lead to conflict cessation or a durable transition process.

Given Yemen's historically weak and underdeveloped state mired in regional, tribal, and geopolitical divisions, the 2011 uprising failed to consolidate into a cohesive national movement for change. Moreover, Saudi intervention to broker Saleh's exit at the onset of the uprising secured its position as a key stakeholder in the Yemeni uprising, with destructive consequences. As in Libya, Yemen's fractured political arena

¹¹⁴ Alley (2013): 81. ¹¹⁵ Gaston (2014). ¹¹⁶ Sharp (2019): 10.

and weak state capacity, both prior to and following the uprising, hal-
lowed out the state and its monopoly on the use of force, producing a
protracted civil conflict and proxy warfare. In Yemen, the result was the
world’s worst humanitarian crisis, made worse by the 2020 pandemic.¹¹⁷

Progress and Stagnation in Economic and Political Performance

Mapping change and stagnation aids in explaining trends in governance –
the political, social, economic, and institutional factors that shape and
influence individual and organizational behavior and performance.¹¹⁸
Given the importance of socioeconomic grievances underpinning mass
mobilization in the lead-up to the uprisings, an assessment of progress
and stagnation must account for economic performance. Figure 3.5 illu-
minates pervasive economic stagnation seven years after the uprisings
evinced by negative budget deficits and high public debt across all the
seven case studies. Bahrain, Morocco, and Tunisia sustained lower infla-
tion rates but remain vulnerable due to large debts and deficits.

Our seven country cases include resource-rich and resource-poor
countries. To what extent does oil wealth account for state resilience?
Figure 3.6 shows that while oil is a key source of rent for Libya and to a
lesser extent, Bahrain, the latter has experienced a drop in its natural

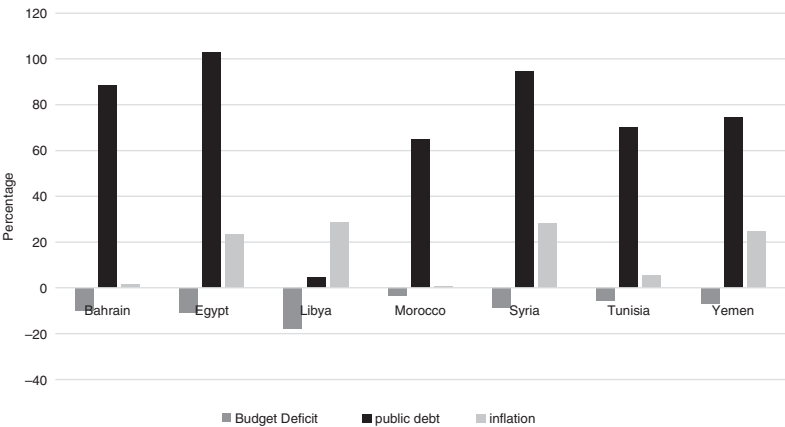


Figure 3.5 Cross-national economic performance, 2017.
Source: CIA World Factbook.

¹¹⁷ UN News (2020). ¹¹⁸ Cammett et al. (2015): 77.

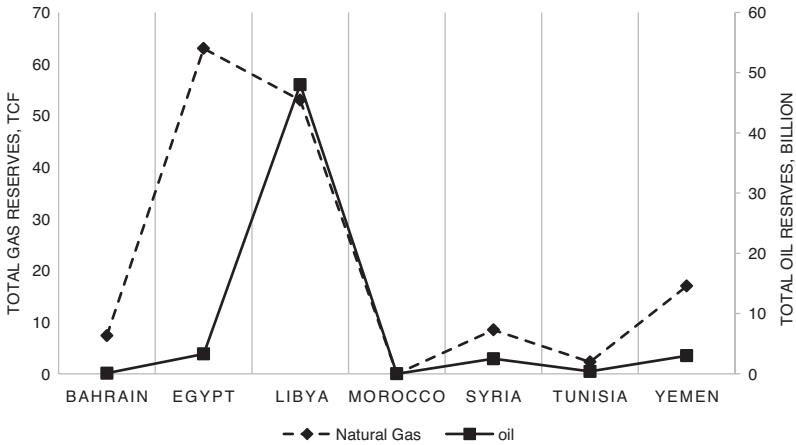


Figure 3.6 Oil and gas reserves, 2019.

Source: US Energy Information Administration.

resources and is one of the least resource-rich of the GCC states, along with Oman. Syria and Yemen both possess oil reserves but are low-producing states. Oil played a crucial factor in one case – Libya, with the largest proven reserves in Africa and the sixth largest in the MENA region. The scramble for Libya’s resources by regional and Western powers dictated the modes and levels of intervention in the conflict prior to and after Qaddafi’s toppling (see Chapter 6). In comparing the fates of Bahrain and Libya, we find that resource wealth offers only limited explanatory power in understanding state resilience and divergent outcomes.

What of economic performance more broadly? As Figure 3.5 showed, there has been little progress in economic growth and performance prior to and following the uprisings, with Bahrain ranking among the highest in per capita GDP growth, at least partly due to its GCC membership.¹¹⁹ Note Libya’s precipitous decline between 2012 and 2016, as well as that of Syria after 2011.

Given its historically well-established rentier economy and its membership in the GCC, Bahrain’s economic performance may have been

¹¹⁹ We acknowledge the limitations of relying on GDP as a measure of economic performance and growth and concur with Cammett et al., that its usage here reflects orders of magnitude rather than exact “truths” particularly given that for countries experiencing instability, figures are often best guesses, and other dimensions of conflicts, particularly in Libya, Syria, and Yemen, have stifled economic performance. Cammett et al. (2015): 36–7.

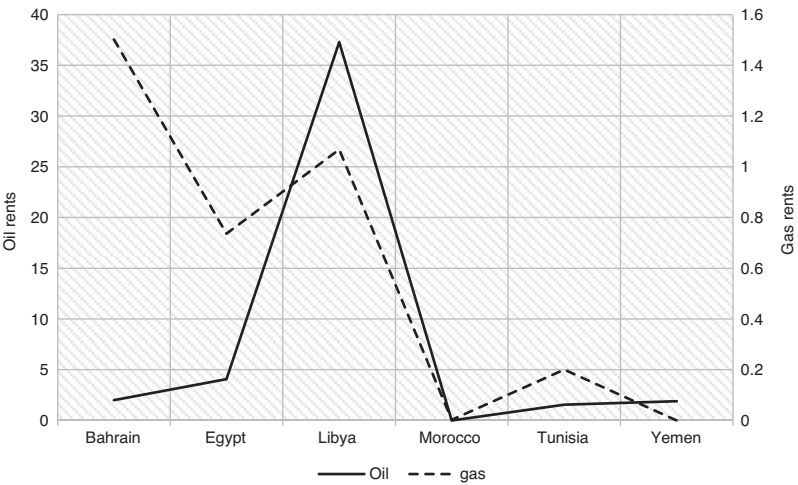


Figure 3.7 Oil and gas rents (% of GDP), 2017.
Source: World Bank. Syria is excluded due to absence of data for the given year.

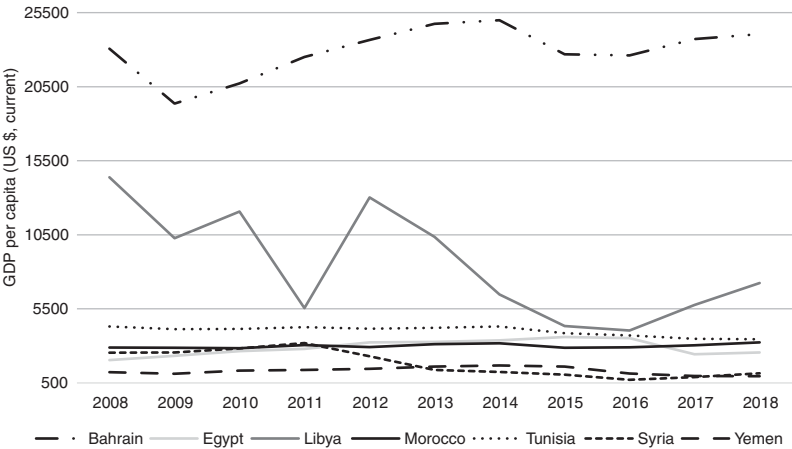


Figure 3.8 GDP growth per capita, 2008–18.
Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators. Data for Syria obtained from UNCTAD.

enhanced by diversification toward tourism and banking and finance, especially in the area of “Islamic financing.” Although it saw a slight uptick in 2017–18, its trajectory has varied only slightly over the past

decade. Our other resource-rich case, Libya, saw its economic performance decline sharply following the uprisings, with per capita GDP dropping from \$14,382 in 2008 to \$7,241 in 2018. Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen have seen slight variations, the most notable being Syria's drop post 2012, but their overall trajectory reflects economic stagnation. Tunisia's democratic political transformation has positively shifted toward free and competitive elections, the proliferation of free and independent media outlets, and a robust civil society, but the realization of the socioeconomic demands of the protests remains unfinished business, particularly for the country's youth population and those in the neglected interior regions.

This chapter has highlighted the role of the military as a key state institution, and the variations in its deployment across our country cases. Resources devoted to the military are indicative of both government priorities and international influences. As seen in Figure 3.2, although Morocco outspends Egypt on the military as percentage of government spending, Egypt receives more military aid from the USA, with \$1.3 billion in estimated annual allocations, making it also the largest arms importer. Egypt and Morocco receive large amounts of official development assistance, the former primarily from the USA and the latter from the EU, which shapes the level of external influence on domestic politics in both countries as they constitute regional security sites for Western states. Tunisia has received comparatively less development assistance and foreign economic and military aid. The absence of external intervention may have helped Tunisia weather the protests and pursue its democratic transition organically, but the state's coffers will need outside financial and development assistance if the problems of high unemployment and citizen dissatisfaction are to be tackled in a productive manner.

Conclusions

In 2011, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco appeared most likely to embark on a path of democratization. Tunisia's Ben Ali and Egypt's Mubarak had lost control of key security sectors of the state when their armed forces defected from the prior alliances with the autocrats and sided with protesters. The strength of political parties and CSOs in Tunisia enabled the opposition to make more demands on the state and the ruling elite than in Egypt, where both political parties and civil society

groups were weaker (see also Chapter 4). In Morocco, King Mohammed VI had to cooperate with political parties and CSOs given the state's inability to fully co-opt opposition groups. However, Morocco's political and institutional development is limited by the ruling monarchy's capture of state institutions.

Egypt's turning point in 2013, following the ouster of the country's only democratically elected government and the return of authoritarian rule, epitomizes the vagaries of predicting and mapping protest trajectories and transition outcomes. Unlike Egypt, the army's role in Tunisia was limited and the transition phase diverse with Islamists, secular parties and members of Ben Ali's ruling elite making concessions. As such, Tunisia has fared far better than Egypt, but both cases confirm the observation by O'Donnell and Schmitter that democratic transitions often "fail to provide any enduring or predictable solution to the problem of institutionalizing political power." O'Donnell and Schmitter continue: "Transitions can also develop into widespread, violent confrontations, eventually giving way to revolutionary regimes which promote changes going far beyond the political realm."¹²⁰ If none of our seven cases so far has developed into a thoroughgoing *social* revolution, only Tunisia has had a genuinely *political* revolution, and nowhere does there appear to be either the appetite or the opportunity for a revolutionary regime or for extensive change that goes "far beyond the political realm."

What Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia shared were largely nonviolent protests (although *unarmed* violent protest did occur in Egypt). This was true of the protesters in Bahrain but not of protesters in Libya, Syria, and Yemen, yet in all four cases, states responded with considerable force and repression. Charles Tripp argues that state violence was a necessary, but not sufficient, cause of the turn to violent revolt in Syria and Libya (also in the 1990s in Algeria, and in Palestine against Israel).¹²¹ We agree, and we concur that regional and international intervention played an important part, as we will elaborate in Chapter 6. We would add that the absence of a modern civil society and significant women's participation and rights was a key feature in the turn to violence in those countries, as we argue in Chapters 4 and 5.

Domestic, regional, and international dynamics and processes calibrated regime responses to popular protest movements. Libya, Syria,

¹²⁰ O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986): 6. ¹²¹ Tripp (2013).

and Yemen experienced considerable external intervention. Bahrain's integration into the GCC alliance and the presence of the American Fifth Fleet in the country sustained the al-Khalifa monarchy's importance for regional and international actors as a bulwark against perceived Iranian expansion in the Persian Gulf. Egypt's historic alliance with the USA manifested through foreign military commitments and the importance of the Sinai Peninsula and Suez Canal bolsters the power of the ruling elite and the army. The Obama administration's reticence to call the events in 2013 a coup, and President Trump's penchant for al-Sisi, whom he referred to as a "fantastic guy," illuminate the linkages between autocrats and Western powers.¹²² Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia benefit from official development assistance (ODA) as well as bilateral assistance from the USA and EU.

Some scholars have attributed Tunisia's success to its homogeneity and longstanding embrace of a moderate Arab-Muslim identity. We attribute Tunisia's relative success with democratization to its institutional legacy, the strength of civil society, the determination of feminist groups, and the absence of international interference. The following chapter (Chapter 4) examines the salience of civil society to the uprising and outcomes in Tunisia and in our other country cases.

¹²² Lima (2016).

4 *Civil Society*

Since at least the early 1980s, studies and debates have revolved around the nature of civil society, its relationship to the state and to democracy, and its utility as an analytical tool. Here we focus on two approaches to civil society. In one, civil society is a separate and autonomous sphere essential to democracy; it protects individuals and groups and gives them voice vis-à-vis the power of the state and, in some interpretations, the market. This view goes back to some extent to Alexis de Tocqueville's nineteenth century observations about the quality of American democracy, which he attributed in large measure to its many associations serving as "schools for civic virtue."¹ The other approach is a more skeptical one, positing that civil society is either an extension of the state apparatus or a sphere that provides legitimacy to the status quo and thus helps to reproduce it. In this Marxist-inflected view, civil society may be able to compel the ruling elite to enact some reforms, but it has neither the capacity nor the will to produce large-scale systemic change.

We argue here that both arguments have merit and that each is context specific. Civil society's relative autonomy and its capacity to challenge the state and effect social or political change is variable and thus an empirical question, dependent on the nature of a country's historical development and social structure. We also distinguish civil society in advanced capitalist democracies from civil society in authoritarian settings. Where associational growth is possible in an

¹ *Democracy in America* is available in many forms, including an on-line version supported by the University of Virginia: http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch2_07.htm. See especially Vol. 2 (completed in 1840) chapter on "Relation of Civil to Political Associations." This lover of America and its democracy – especially when compared with the monarchies and aristocracies of France and Britain – is often astute in his characterizations but is sometimes given to odd observations or exaggerations, such as: "In democracies servants are not only equal among themselves, but it may be said that they are, in some sort, the equals of their masters."

authoritarian context, the autonomous and oppositional space necessary for democratization can be built. We then assess the strength and capacity of civil society in our seven country cases, with a focus on the modern civil society organizations (CSOs), including those centered on human rights, women's rights, labor, and environmental protection. We discuss CSO ties to political parties and the opportunities or constraints that such ties have posed for CSO capacity. To anticipate the discussion that follows, we find that the countries with formal and modern CSOs of a longer duration were more likely to positively influence the nature of the Arab uprisings and their aftermath in a more democratic direction. Tunisia and Morocco, compared with the other countries we examine, had more developed civil societies, which have only grown more robust since 2011, despite democratization's growing pains in the two countries.

Debating Civil Society

Third-wave democratic transitions generated studies highlighting the significance of CSOs outside the purview of the state for dismantling authoritarian rule and establishing frameworks for individual freedom and deliberative democracy.² Andrew Arato wrote about developments in Poland as "civil society against the state," while Jean Cohen wrote *Class and Civil Society: The Limits of Marxian Critical Theory*. In their joint book, *Civil Society in Political Theory*, Cohen and Arato revive Hegelian but also Parsonian notions of "societal community," wherein economically stratified and politically bureaucratic societies contain a differentiated and autonomous social sphere based on influence and persuasion rather than money and power.³ This is not far from the liberal notion of how "interest groups" operate to influence or limit government, but in the view of Cohen and Arato, civil society allows for inclusion and a universalistic sphere of civil morality, equality, solidarity, and liberty. Civil society is a normative space for non-instrumental dialogue and ethical principles such as freedom, solidarity, and enlightenment, which are in contrast to the materiality and power of states and markets. Cohen and Arato draw on scholars in political theory, including German theorist Jürgen Habermas' work on

² O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986); Rau (1991).

³ Arato (1981); Cohen (1983); Cohen and Arato (1992).

the importance of “communicative dialogue” in a “public sphere” that fulfills the promise of the European Enlightenment.

Many studies have emphasized the nonviolent and *civil* nature of civil society; participation in CSOs is assumed to harbor and promote tolerance, peaceful resolution of conflict, and civility. In other words, CSOs are modern and forward-looking. Civil society is comprised of physical spaces and activities (“associational life”) as well as a moral and communicative site. For John Keane, it is a legally protected nongovernmental order that ensures individuals’ daily freedom from violence and other incivilities; constitutes a check on hierarchies and abuses of power; and enables groups and individuals, freely within the law, to define and express social identities as equals but with respect for others.⁴ In these ways, civil society enhances the capacity for trust, solidarity, and “social capital.”⁵ In some accounts, civil society consists of networks of formal, voluntary associations among diverse groups, excluding primordial, family-related or market-based profitable organizations. In other accounts, kin-based or other affective networks are part of civil society.⁶ Much of the literature assumes civil society and democracy to be conjoined, as was discussed in Chapter 2.

At the international conferences that the United Nations (UN) organized in the 1980s and 1990s – from conferences on women to those on the environment, human rights, population and development, poverty and employment, and settlements – the world’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including those from the MENA region, were provided both space and legitimacy to convene, interact, and deliberate on draft outcome documents. Indeed, for the UN:

Civil society is the “third sector” of society, along with government and business. It comprises civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. The UN recognizes the importance of partnering with civil society, because it advances the Organization’s ideals, and helps support its work.⁷

It is perhaps this understanding of civil society that captured the imagination of MENA scholars and advocates, who then celebrated the

⁴ Keane (1998, 2004).

⁵ See Alexander (2006); Habermas (1984); Putnam (2000).

⁶ Diamond (1994); Hårdig (2015).

⁷ “Civil Society,” www.un.org/en/sections/resources-different-audiences/civil-society/

proliferation of associations and NGOs of all types. In the early 1990s, and in a period of post-Cold War democracy promotion and political liberalization (albeit limited and managed) in MENA, scholars addressed the increasing pressure on regimes from both international organizations and their own citizens. In a two-volume study that examined “the vitality and dynamism of civil society” in Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen and among the Palestinians, scholars discussed the implications of the proliferation of associations, clubs, syndicates, federations, unions, parties, and groups: these provided a buffer between state and citizen and were at the forefront of political liberalization in the region.⁸

In a complementary version developed at the turn of the new century, *global civil society* came to mean a transnational site and space that eschews self-interest and violence toward the making of progressive social change.⁹ Aspects of globalization had enabled solidarities across borders and networks of activists around human rights, peace, justice, and democratization. As understood and practiced by its adherents, especially those in and around the World Social Forum (WSF), global civil society was distinct from the state, political parties, and the market, and was a site for discussion, dialogue, and deliberative democracy by transnational actors.¹⁰ Indeed, participation in WSF meetings were limited to representatives of civil society and social movements, as in the following excerpts from Articles 1 and 5 of the WSF *Charter of Principles*, June 2001:

The WSF is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and inter-linking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society . . . The WSF bring together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries of the world.

Arab groups took part in the WSF, and Tunis was twice the site of the global convergences, in 2013 and 2015.

Others have critiqued the notion of global civil society as an ideal or virtual space, arguing that it differs from existing civil societies around

⁸ Norton (1995, 1996). ⁹ Anheier et al. (2001); Kaldor (2003).

¹⁰ Keck and Sikkink (1998); Smith et al. (1997). In 2019, the WSF still eschewed participation by political parties; it also was considered by many to have run its course. See <https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/wsf-savio>; <https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/wsf-malig-solon>; and other contributions.

the world. Similarly, Marxian conceptions of civil society have been less celebratory, noting Antonio Gramsci's analysis of how the capitalist class maintains control not only through force, but also through consent.¹¹ Gramsci wrote that "the institutions of civil society [form] . . . the 'outer earthworks' of the state, through which the ruling classes [maintain] their 'hegemony' or dominance in society;" and he referred to "the consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group." The bourgeois state tolerates civil society not only because the latter is weak or easily co-opted, but also because the ruling class exerts its *cultural hegemony* in civil society, which then functions to legitimate the state; CSOs thus may function as extensions of the state and ruling elite. In Althusserian terms, civil society is part of the *ideological state apparatus*, which includes religious, educational, family, legal, political, communications, and cultural institutions, and which Althusser distinguishes from the *repressive state apparatus*, containing government, administration, army, police, courts, and prisons.¹² For Gramsci (also Althusser), it follows that such ideological control must be contested and challenged by "organic intellectuals" – or the Party – who craft counter-hegemonic ideas and projects.¹³ How this would come about depends on existing conditions, and thus Gramsci distinguished the necessary "war of position" that Left intellectuals had to patiently adopt in capitalist society from the "war of movement" that was possible in specific conditions conducive to revolution. In short, counter-hegemony should precede the seizing and maintaining of power.

Gramsci's take on civil society is rather different from the view of civil society as a realm of freedom and autonomy. Skeptics point out that the term came into usage in the 1980s by post-structuralist leftists and then in the early 1990s by the architects of neoliberalism, especially in an era of the retreat of the state from economic and social development. The civil society discourse prevalent in the 1990s reflected the rise of NGOs, seen by critics as complementary to the neoliberal version of capitalism. In the Arab region, as structural adjustment policies led governments to cut back on public-sector employment and subsidies, an array of associations, including long-standing

¹¹ Munck (2006); Wood (1990). ¹² Althusser (1971); Gramsci (1982).

¹³ See Hoare and Smith (1971), esp. pp. 3–9.

charities, picked up the slack and began to offer services for the poor, children, and women in need. Privatization was one pathway to the formation of the many social-service and development NGOs that were formed. The other pathway was democracy promotion, largely organized externally.

With the collapse of communism and the putative triumph of liberal democracy (hailed by Francis Fukayama and others), the post-Cold War era saw Western international aid devoted to democracy promotion, typically accompanied by the promotion of the market economy.¹⁴ In some cases, and especially after 2001, “tied aid” obligated certain governments to join the “War on Terror” and purchase American military hardware. In principle, foreign aid can be a form of interdependence whereby both donor and recipient engage in a mutually beneficial exchange. (See also Chapter 6.) Typically, however, aid increases dependency on the recipient’s part (usually from the periphery) and enhances donor influence and power (typically a core country, more recently from the semi-periphery). In general, democracy-promotion assistance and other supports for CSOs or NGOs would appear to function much as Gramsci suggested: as a means by which core powers expand their hegemony, and as a camouflage for the continued power of the state and ruling class. Without the sort of prolonged Gramscian “war of position” and “counter-hegemonic” activity, progressive social transformation could hardly be expected to occur.

Our Assessment

Seen in the light of how deeply embedded neoliberal capitalist commercialism has become in civil society and the public sphere, especially in the USA but also in other advanced industrialized countries, the 1980s literature does seem to present an idealized notion of an autonomous and moral civil society. To the contrary, civil society may function to legitimate the ruling system, camouflage elite power, or depoliticize militants and even reformers, an appropriation undermining social trust in leaders and political institutions.¹⁵ In this way, civil society, as an institution of capitalist democracy, is tolerated rather than feared by the state. In the USA, many civil society groups receive corporate or

¹⁴ Fukayama (1992); Youngs (2009). ¹⁵ Seligman (1992).

foundation funding, as well as grants from state agencies, making them less likely to engage in radical politics. Access to the vaunted *public sphere* that Jurgen Habermas discussed (as an *ideal* and not necessarily a reality) is now controlled by a handful of corporate media giants.¹⁶ As such, not only is the boundary between civil society and the state (and market) porous and indeterminate, but the counter-hegemony that Gramsci discussed becomes ever more necessary. In the USA, alternative media such as *Truthdig*, *Democracy Now*, *Truthout*, *the Jacobin*, *Portside* and the web postings of various civil society or social movement organizations are a counterpoint to the power of the establishment press and corporate media, but they struggle to be heard.

But could civil society operate differently, and mean something else, in authoritarian societies? For example, *contra* the idealization of the “self-limiting” civil society demands of Poland and Czechoslovakia and other “refolutions” that claimed not to seek state power, the coordinated efforts of civil society in East-Central Europe did in fact bring down communist systems and effected the transition to capitalist democracy – and soon, helped consolidate neoliberal capitalism across the globe. That is, beyond abstract notions of civil society as a moral and liberatory sphere of trust-building and associational life, could civil society help bring about regime change in the direction of a pluralistic and democratic order? If so, what are the conditions that enable associations and social movements under authoritarian rule to do so? Does violent contention signal something about the nature of the protest movement and what the outcomes might be? Is nonviolent, *civil* organizing and mobilizing a precondition for successful democratization? Finally, which of the seven countries examined in this book possessed enough of those conditions to influence the course and outcome of the Arab Spring protests?

We posit a distinction between civil society in advanced capitalist democracies – where the state/market-civil society boundary is porous – and civil society in authoritarian contexts, where the capacity of CSOs to challenge the state and effect change is more likely, which also helps explain why civil society can be under such pressure from the state. The actual capacity of civil society in an authoritarian context (or a one-party system context) and its potential to effect change is an empirical

¹⁶ Habermas expounded on this notion in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. For scholarly analyses and critiques, see Calhoun (1993).

question, to be examined through case studies. Civil society emerged under varied conditions and resources in the period before the outbreak of the Arab Spring. Often, CSOs and social movements emerged spontaneously but were repressed by the state. In many countries, civil society seems to have consisted of NGOs carrying out the previous work of state agencies but now under conditions of economic liberalization and privatization. Clark and Schwedler, for example, describe the grassroots and social-service provisioning of Islamist organizations in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen.¹⁷ In this way, Islamist organizations seized the new politico-economic opportunity to launch a kind of “war of position,” or a political strategy of gaining influence. This was done through their work in neighborhoods and communities; by running candidates for parliament as “independents”; and (especially in Egypt) through influence in “syndicates,” or associations of professionals such as lawyers and journalists. Elsewhere, the longer-term process of building a modern civil society separate from both the state’s neoliberal authoritarianism and the Islamist project unfolded as social, class, and gender relations were becoming modernized, and as state structures provided more breathing space as a response to both domestic and international pressures. Tunisia, we argue, is the distinctive case, followed by Morocco.

As for unarmed violent contention deployed by civil society actors, its use may depend on the extant circumstances and on the nature of the protest coalition. Egypt’s supporters used unarmed violence during and after the anti-Mubarak protests.¹⁸ Quite apart from how the regime responds, the deployment of unarmed violent tactics may be a deliberate strategy to unsettle or distract the authorities; it may be carried out by an unruly segment of a protest coalition against the preferences of other coalition members; or it may be a strategy to sideline other members of the protest movement. In some cases, it might signal the presence of widespread hyper-masculinism – in civil society and political society alike.

Civil Society in MENA

The Arab states of the 1950s–80s were characterized by authoritarian policies that ensured state-led socioeconomic development and the

¹⁷ Clark and Schwedler (2003). ¹⁸ See Ketchley (2017).

provisioning of health, education, and other welfarist policies largely borrowed from international models, whether liberal or socialist.¹⁹ They built organizations for women and youth while tolerating and closely monitoring non-state groups and their activities. In the 1960s and 1970s, radical student movements could be found in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Syria, among other Arab countries, in the context of worldwide youth movements inspired by socialism, communism, or “Third Worldism.” Such movements reflected antipathy toward colonialism and imperialism, including the American war in Vietnam, and solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. The Arab Socialist Union emerged at this time, and the region was rife with socialist and communist groupings of various hues, including some guerilla groups. In the 1970s and into the 1980s, the young women who were part of the left-wing movements later founded study groups focused on women-and-development issues, the precursors of the women’s rights organizations that emerged in the 1980s and proliferated in the 1990s. By that time, the left-wing movements had largely dissipated; a typical tactic of MENA states in the 1970s had been to target the Left for repression, which in turn encouraged and enabled Islamist movements to grow. The diffusion of political Islam proved challenging to secular and left-wing groups, although in the new century some joint attempts were made in Egypt and Tunisia to form oppositional coalitions. It is worth reiterating that many of the feminist groups that emerged in the 1980s, and the CSOs and NGOs of the 1990s, were the successors of past social and political struggles involving labor and left-wing parties and movements.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the shift from state-led development to privatization and economic liberalization was accompanied by a series of worker protests but also a measure of political liberalization.²⁰ Most MENA states responded to international pressures by permitting a political opening, albeit one that was managed and controlled from above.²¹ The rise and proliferation of NGOs accompanied the shrinkage of the economic capacity of the MENA state, as throughout the Third World. With economic restructuring, the introduction of user fees in education and healthcare and rising prices

¹⁹ Karshenas and Moghadam (2006); Karshenas et al. (2014).

²⁰ Harik and Sullivan (1992); Niblock and Murphy (1993).

²¹ Achcar (2013); Richards and Waterbury (1996).

resulting from liberalization called for private-sector or “third sector” involvement. As one NGO representative from Egypt put it:

Upon examining the nascent Egyptian experiment of shifting towards market economy and democratization, we realize that a kind of transformation is beginning to take shape in society. The state can no longer struggle under the burden of production and welfare for the citizens, and is beginning to open up vistas for the private and community sectors to assume their roles in building civil society, participating in production, and shouldering the efforts to offset the negative side-effects of economic restructuring.²²

NGOs stepped in to provide health, literacy, legal aid, and other social services, catering to the basic needs of local communities. Arguably, Islamist charities benefited the most, especially in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen, enhancing recruitment drives and mobilization capacities. In Egypt, the numerous Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) that were run by Islamist organizations received funding through Islamic *zakat*, donations from financial institutions and Islamic movements. About 3,000 mosques annexed to their premises health centers staffed by part-time doctors working on a voluntary basis or receiving nominal fees.²³ The Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services, with its long-standing presence in Upper Egypt, ran income-generating, family planning, health, and literacy projects. As the state withdrew from its responsibility for universalist services to all its citizens, some NGO-ization was built on existing sectarian divisions while also reflecting privatization.

NGOs also included human rights and women’s rights associations, and an array of professional associations, some of which engaged in advocacy or had many activist members. In the 1990s and into the new century, certain CSOs and NGOs conducted research for advocacy purposes, raising awareness about women’s conditions, political restrictions, environmental degradation, and other issues. Moghadam identified women’s CSOs and NGOs that emerged in the 1980s and expanded in the 1990s. These included service-oriented NGOs such as the many charitable foundations and associations in which women traditionally had been involved; professional associations (such as the Women’s Rights Committee of the Arab Lawyers Union, based in Cairo); development research centers and women’s studies institutes;

²² Samuel (1995): 26, cited in Moghadam (1998b): 201.

²³ Kandil (1995): 66, 73.

human rights/women's rights organizations; women-in-development NGOs; women's organizations affiliated to political parties; worker-based and grassroots women's organizations. She noted weaknesses, challenges, and constraints, pointing out that women's NGOs were not mass movements and did not include the participation of urban poor, working-class and rural women – as NGOs did in India and Latin America. Still, she concluded:

In Middle Eastern societies, where the public sphere has historically been the province of men, where male-female gaps are still huge (except in higher education), where economic decision-making is entirely male, and where women's participation in formal political structures and in elections – whether as candidates or as voters – is still low and in some cases declining [...], the very existence of women's NGOs challenges the patriarchal order in profound ways.²⁴

NGO proliferation generated a plethora of academic studies on civil society and citizenship, along with debates on the nature of the NGOs and the absence of social movements.²⁵ Now and again, more expansive notions of “citizenship rights” emerged, such as in the Maghreb countries, often deployed by feminists (*pour la citoyenneté des femmes*). Abdelrahman defines as “pro-citizenship” the spontaneous and dispersed protests of Egypt's urban poor and workers who demanded better urban services.²⁶ It is not clear that such demands for what T.H. Marshall called “the social rights of citizenship” were a prominent or explicit theme within Egypt's civil society. They did, however, feature in the 2011 uprisings in Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt. Hårdig notes that the literature on MENA civil society covers a diversity of groups: those with deep social roots and religious or communal identities (at times “uncivil” in their approach to other groups); modern groups with a secular or liberal orientation; formal organizations; informal networks; and autonomous organizations and networks versus those tied to the state or political parties.²⁷ Distinguishing CSOs and NGOs could be difficult, but certain women's rights groups, trade unions, and human rights groups could be defined as part of both social movements and civil society.

²⁴ Moghadam (1998b): 216.

²⁵ Butenschon et al. (2000); Jad (2010); Norton (1995). See also Moghadam (2003a).

²⁶ Abdelrahman (2004, 2012). ²⁷ Hårdig (2015).

External Funding: A Problem or Necessity?

After the signing of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995, the European Union (EU) provided funding and technical assistance for civil society projects and the promotion of good governance. International funding helped certain CSOs such as Egypt's Ibn Khaldoun Center, but they could be prosecuted for receiving outside funding, as was the Center's experience. For many CSOs, donor funding was a lifeline, though some preferred European to American funding. Ferial Lalami writes that Algerian women's rights organizations opposed Algeria's law on associations, as it "increased governmental control of women's organizations, and the sources of foreign funding that enable them, on the argument of sovereignty."²⁸ Even today, women's associations that do not benefit from national subsidies use foreign grants to realize their missions. The funds – from the EU or from UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP, World Health Organization (WHO), or from international NGOs such as Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Freedom House, or the Global Fund for Women – help realize social actions: establishing hotlines or programs for single mothers, or developing tools for advocacy, such as the national inquiry in Algeria on violence against women, established in 2005 with the help of the WHO, the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and the UN Development Fund for Women.

By the early 2000s, however, criticisms of MENA civil society and NGOs included the elite nature of many CSOs and NGOs and the problem of international funding. Egyptian NGOs were the recipient of millions of dollars of aid from the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Critics argued that American aid was meant not just to promote democracy but also to encourage and broaden the neoliberal agenda of privatization and liberalization.²⁹ Moreover, much of American aid to Egypt went to the military, shoring up the state's authoritarian capacity. International funding also helped diffuse

²⁸ Lalami (2019): 80.

²⁹ See Carapico (2000). Such aid to MENA civil society echoed the American Marshall Plan to Europe after World War II. The intent was to sideline the Soviet Union and weaken the influence of communist parties; create markets in Europe for US goods; and strengthen US economic and strategic interests. As such, it was an antecedent to later neoliberal policies. For such a heterodox view of the Marshall Plan, see Steil (2019).

liberal concepts such as good governance, markets, democracy, and civil society.

Constraints, Weaknesses, and Initiatives

Under conditions of authoritarianism, CSOs or NGOs could hardly advocate for political change, but some did precisely that, as with Egyptian-American sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim's Ibn Khaldoun Center and magazine, *Civil Society*, and the *Kefaya* movement, which emerged in late 2004 to call for electoral reform and more political transparency. The Tunisian trade union federation UGTT, which had been founded in 1946, periodically engaged in protest action against government policy, during both the Bourguiba and Ben Ali eras. By contrast, the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) operated as an arm of the state.³⁰ An example of a politically-minded civil society initiative and effort at coalition-building is the series of conferences that took place in Cairo from 2002–08, initially held to mobilize regional and international support to oppose US plans to invade Iraq. Subsequently, the conferences were held in December 2003, March 2005, March 2006, March 2007, and March 2008, attracting a growing number of Arab and international activists each year, with delegations coming from Europe, North America, and the Global South. Egyptian leftists, Islamists, and nationalists were prominent in the conference organizing committees, although eventually the leftists dropped out and the conferences were dominated by Nasserists and Islamists.

From 2005 to 2008 a Women's Forum was one of several social forums that ran in parallel as part of the conference, representing the same array of political and ideological orientations. In their separate analyses, Abdelrahman, Browers, and Pratt show how the conferences brought together activists opposed to imperialism, Zionism, dictatorship, and neoliberal economic reforms. Their analyses reveal the possibilities for alliance-building but also the internal fissures that led to the initiative's weakening, which was then compounded by the Mubarak regime's harassment and denial of a permit for a conference in 2009. One of the internal weaknesses pertained to the role of women in the conferences and the analysis of women's legal rights and social

³⁰ Beinín (2010); Bishara (2018).

positions.³¹ As Pratt showed, the women participants largely identified the source of oppression and violence as the USA and its allies, including Israel and the Egyptian government. They also defined themselves in terms of their mothering and childrearing roles, and as helpmeets to their menfolk and male fighters.

In his study of MENA civil society in general and comparison of Egypt and Lebanon in particular, Hårdig distinguishes between “revolutionary” (Egypt) and “evolutionary” (Lebanon) approaches to reform. He notes the two terms for civil society: *abli* (which implies kinship or indigenous) and *madani* (deriving from city, implies a more modern civic-type activity). As he explains, the various religious, faith-based, charity, family-based, and confessional associations, formal and informal alike, would be part of *abli*, and he also includes development organizations, local development NGOs, and community-based organizations in this category. *Madani* likewise includes formal and informal networks, along with trade associations, labor unions, professional associations, politically affiliated NGOs, national development NGOs, youth networks, and advocacy/governance NGOs. For Hårdig, *abli* and *madani* alike include development-oriented or poverty-alleviating NGOs as well as politically-affiliated networks and associations.³²

Whereas some MENA CSOs and NGOs were products of structural adjustment and neoliberalization, others helped create a new political space for organizing, mobilizing, democratic deliberation, and civic skills-building, assisted in part by the new information and computer technologies (ICTs). The widespread use of the fax and email in the 1990s was followed by the introduction of satellite TV. Al-Jazeera – which played a critical role during the Arab Spring by diffusing protest images – was launched in November 1996 by the Qatari government; the Saudi-owned station al-Arabiyya was established in 2003 in Dubai. Soon, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube became the social networking media of choice for activism, advocacy, and information diffusion. Numerous websites, social networking sites, blogs, and tweets came to be used by CSOs and NGOs, and in most countries, cyber-savvy youth groups were formed in the years before the Arab Spring uprisings.

³¹ Abdelrahman (2009); Browsers (2009); Pratt (2012).

³² See Hårdig (2015): 1137–8.

Under conditions of authoritarianism in our case-study countries, an incipient civil society did emerge, but as will become evident, it was far more controlled, co-opted or fragmented in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen than in Morocco and Tunisia. Given that Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen were divided societies, government-organized NGOs were likely to be exclusionary and private associations divided along sectarian or regional lines. In what follows, we examine civil society in the seven country case studies. We begin with Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco, where civil society was more developed, albeit subject to variable degrees of state control or repression.

Civil Society Development: Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt

Tunisia

Tunisia's model of republican authoritarianism allowed for the growth of political parties as well as CSOs. In a 1995 paper, Bellin describes several distinctive features of Tunisian society and polity, including "that overarching sense of political community so essential to the development of a 'civic culture' but so rare in the Arab world," adding that "the state has publicly committed itself to the development of civil society in Tunisia," in part through "generous" subsidies to associations. She tracks civil society development from the UGTT's 1946 formation to the early Bourguiba years through the Ben Ali period, highlighting both control and accommodation.³³ The Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH), formed in 1977, was the first in the Arab region; the Lawyers' (or Bar) Association was founded in 1887. The UGTT periodically clashed with government, resisting price increases in 1978 through a general strike and structural adjustment through the 1984 bread riots. It had its own publishing unit. Bellin writes that Tunisia's foray into multipartyism did not introduce sufficient competitiveness. We argue, however, that Tunisia's history of associational life and political organizing created a pathway to a peaceful uprising and a democratic transition.

CSOs also included feminist groups able to coalesce and set the agenda on women's rights, the student organization *l'Union Générale des Etudiants Tunisiens* (UGET), and the employers' trade organization UTICA. On the eve of the Arab Spring protests, Tunisia had about 221

³³ Bellin (1995): 124, 139.

registered NGOs.³⁴ In the years before the UGTT-led general strike of January 2011, a wide political gulf had emerged between the labor movement and the regime; local unionists had been involved in local protests, and “many leftists sought political asylum within the UGTT.”³⁵ Ben Ali’s police kept a close watch on both civil society and political society actors, repressing any Islamist or communist militancy. A teacher and leading UGTT member also active in the women’s rights movement who had worked with Tajdid in the 2004 elections explained, “We had years of struggle before the 2011 revolution and paid a high price for our activism in those early years.”³⁶ In 2005, a coalition of political forces formed to oppose Ben Ali’s continued grip on power, demand the release of political prisoners, and call for human rights. The October 18 Coalition for Rights and Freedoms in Tunisia included the Communist Workers Party (PCOT), the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), Ettakatol, and Ennahda. The coalition presaged the capacity for cooperation and compromise that would reveal itself after 2011 – even though relations between Islamists and secularists would prove to be fraught with tensions once the democratic transition was launched.

Worker protests and strikes took place in 2008 and 2010, reflecting dissatisfaction with unemployment, rising prices, rural poverty, and repression. The phosphate-mining southern region of Gafsa erupted in 2008 triggered by continued poverty and environmental degradation. Human rights activists, lawyers, trade unionists, UGET members, and others formed a Committee for the Support of the Mining Region. As described by its spokesperson, Messaoud Romdhani, the committee’s three objectives were to defend the movement leaders in court, break the wall of silence that the regime tried to build around the movement, and assist the prisoners’ families financially and morally.³⁷ Dissatisfaction and years of collective action eventually culminated in the cross-class revolt of December 2010–January 2011. Initially, informal groupings and networks were the dominant forces against the regime: “young, unemployed,

³⁴ République Tunisienne/IFEDA (2018).

³⁵ Hamza Meddeb, comments at the session on “The Arab Spring and the Quest for New Politics in Egypt and Tunisia: Beyond the Islamist and Secularist Divide,” annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, November 25, 2014 (author notes).

³⁶ Emna Aoudi, personal interview with Moghadam, Tunis, March 12, 2015.

³⁷ In 2012 Messaoud Romdhani was a member of the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights and sat on the organizing committee of the WSF 2013, which was held in Tunis in late March 2013. See Romdhani (2012).

or informal workers; students; civil servants; itinerant peddlers; and marginalized or excluded individuals.”³⁸ Soon a range of other actors joined the anti-regime movement, including the UGTT leadership – which allowed its local and regional offices to become centers for the activists – and the Tunisian Bar Association. According to Anne Wolfe, regional members of the RCD also joined the protests, not realizing that they would lose their party and positions after the end of the Ben Ali regime. Soon, all the legal opposition parties as well as the Islamists joined the anti-regime movement, in a nationwide movement with slogans such as *Ben Ali d’égage*, and *emploi, notre droit*.³⁹ Tunisia’s UGTT, long involved with the international labor movement, received support and encouragement from the International Trade Union Confederation, and the group Anonymous was always available to help the democratic cyberactivists there and elsewhere in North Africa.

After Ben Ali’s departure, civil society and political society actors coalesced to call for a new political direction while defending what they saw as the gains of the past, notably, women’s rights, a welfare state, and a moderate Arab-Muslim republican identity. As described by Deane, Tunisia’s transitional government enacted laws to encourage greater civic participation and new political parties. The Higher Authority for the Realization of Revolutionary Objectives, Political Reform and the Democratic Transitions, established in February 2011 as part of the transitional government, codified protections for CSOs and NGOs, enabling them also to testify, comment on, and influence pending government policy and legislation. Provision was made for associations to access information, evaluate the role of state institutions and submit proposals to improve performance, and organize meetings, conferences, demonstrations, and other civic activities. Associations were now far easier to form than in the past, although a formal registering process remained present. Associations could obtain funding from donors; Article 35 of the new law on foreign funding (Decree 88 of 2011) stated only that associations were prohibited from accepting assistance, donations, or grants from countries not diplomatically linked to Tunisia, or from organizations defending the interests and policies of those countries.⁴⁰ In the years after the political

³⁸ Aleya-Sghaier (2014): 39; see also Charrad and Reith (2019).

³⁹ Anne Wolfe, MESA presentation, Boston, Nov. 2016 and in conversation with Moghadam; and Mahmoud Ben Romdhane, presentation at UNESCO, Paris, June 21, 2011, notes by Moghadam, and subsequent conversations.

⁴⁰ Deane (2013): 12.

revolution, the surge of external funding for CSOs and NGOs came from USAID, EU institutions, EU member-states, Japan, GCC states, the UN, the IMF, and the World Bank.⁴¹

While Tunisia was being admired across the world for its procedural democratic transition and preparations were being made to host the WSF in Tunis in March 2013, a series of violent actions by Salafists, including the assassinations in quick succession of two left-wing political leaders associated with the Front Populaire, threatened to derail the process. As the secular opposition organized large protests and demanded the immediate resignation of the government, a group of CSOs led a dialogue between the government and the opposition. Called the National Dialogue Quartet, the UGTT joined forces with three other respected institutions to drive the settlement process: the LTDH, the Bar Association, and UTICA, whose participation side by side with the normally hostile labor union added to the Quartet's moral as well as economic clout.⁴² The mediation and negotiations that the Quartet led averted what could have turned into chaos if not a civil conflict. For its remarkable actions, the Quartet was awarded the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize.

How has Tunisia's civil society developed since then? And what kind of watchdog activity is in place on economic matters? For more than fifty years, Tunisia's interior regions produced oil, gas, and phosphates, which in 2015 represented some 13 percent of exports. Yet those resource-rich regions ranked among the poorest in the country, afflicted also by unemployment and inadequate infrastructure. As Lintzer and Heni explain, the transparency campaign *Winou el Pétrole?* ("Where is the Oil?") provoked confrontation between civil society and authorities in 2015, compelling the government to make important disclosures and engage citizens. Tunisia joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP), a multilateral initiative that promotes more accountable and responsive government, and it agreed to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which ensures clarity around governance of oil, gas, and mineral resources.

⁴¹ Funding from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, among other GCC countries, came to be viewed as a problem. Another concern is that externally funded NGOs may be attracting or luring away "the best and the brightest" from government or private sector enterprises. See Klaas and Dirsus (2018), especially pp. 11–12.

⁴² Chayes (2014).

These global programs – whether through the co-creation of national action plans as required by OGP or the decision-making process hardwired into EITI – have helped institutionalize a dialogue between government and civil society in Tunisia. As a result, the government recently published all of its hydrocarbons contracts and some of its mining contracts. It created an open data portal for natural resource sector information. It also passed an access to information law and drafted a national strategy to fight corruption in consultation with experts and oversight actors. These moves followed loud demands from Tunisians for more disclosure so that they might analyze the historically opaque sector. The conversation and process in Tunisia took time, but the result is clear: An empowered civil society has been critical to furthering open government and democracy in the former dictatorship.⁴³

Civil society actors in Tunisia are fiercely proud of their work and their distance from government and even the political parties. In interviews in Tunis, feminists active in civil society emphasized its importance to Tunisia's democratic transition. Some stressed the cooperation between CSOs and left-wing or secular political parties that had helped check Islamist moves during the constitution-building period. Others raised concerns about the efficacy of the truth commission process.⁴⁴

Morocco

On the 1st of July 2011, a nationwide referendum was held in which Moroccan citizens were asked to accept or reject constitutional changes that had been demanded by protesters the previous February and accepted by the monarch. How did this come about?

Between the 1960s and late 1980s, the “Years of Lead” (*les années de plomb*) under King Hassan II were marked by extensive political repression as well as glacial progress on the social development front. Leftists were arrested, imprisoned, tortured, disappeared, or killed. Across the country, girls from rural or poor families faced underage marriage, domestic servitude, and little to no schooling. As part of the worldwide diffusion of second-wave feminism, women from left-wing groups began to form around women's rights issues; one product was

⁴³ Lintzer and Heni (2017).

⁴⁴ Interviews conducted by Moghadam in Tunis between 2012 and 2016. The Truth and Dignity Commission, chaired by the journalist and human rights activist Mme. Sihem Benseldrine, issued its highly detailed final report in May 2019.

the study group and journal *Thamania Mars* (8th of March), formed in 1984. As Islamic fundamentalism spread across the MENA region, informal networks of intellectuals, educators, artists, and various professionals formed to discuss and consider alternatives. The feminist sociologist and academic Fatema Mernissi was a leading figure in those networks. Her books and interviews on women and development, patriarchal laws, and the forgotten queens of Islam enlivened the public sphere, while her connections to UN bodies such as UNESCO and the United Nations University enhanced her reputation and provided a protective shield against security concerns. By the late 1980s, her anti-fundamentalist network included a publishing house, *Editions le Fennec*, which produced an array of books on women and the law in North African countries.⁴⁵ By the early 1990s, women's rights advocates had formed *l'Association démocratique des femmes du Maroc* (ADFM) and *l'Union de l'action féminine* (UAF), with the latter taking the lead on the One Million Signature Campaign for the reform of the highly patriarchal family law, the *Mudawwana*.⁴⁶ *Thamania Mars* helped publicize the petition drive.⁴⁷

Changes in the structure of Moroccan society, international pressures for political openings to accompany economic liberalization, and a book critical of King Hassan that was published in France and made widely available in Morocco compelled the King to enact some reforms. In 1990 the National Human Rights Council (CNDH) was formed to function as an advisory body. Other reforms included amendments to the family law in 1993, release of detainees, and allowing socialist parties to enter the political process. Some have argued that the government played "a key role in augmenting the number of civic associations to satisfy international pressure for greater liberalization, [and] most organizations were the creations of persons close to the Moroccan authorities."⁴⁸ That may be, but the associations did help to modernize social and

⁴⁵ Fatema is the Amazigh spelling of Fatima, and Mernissi chose to use that spelling later in life. Moghadam first met Mernissi and her Maghreb-wide network at UNU/WIDER in Helsinki in 1989 and invited several network members to her own conference there in October 1990. In November–December 1990 Moghadam interviewed several network members in Algiers, Casablanca, Rabat, and Tunis.

⁴⁶ At a seminar in Helsinki in September 2004, attended by Moghadam, Latifa Jbabdi of the UAF described how she and other UAF activists had launched the campaign in the early 1990s. See also Chapter 5 for details and references.

⁴⁷ Brand (1998). ⁴⁸ Jamal and Khatib (2014): 264.

gender relations in Morocco. One that stands out is the *Association Marocaine des Droits Humains* (AMDH), established in 1979, which “has been at the forefront of the human rights debate since it started condemning the repressive system of King Hassan II.”⁴⁹ The 1998 appointment as prime minister of Abderrahmane Youssoufi, a socialist and former political prisoner, brought about a cabinet with ministers from the Left who supported many civil society initiatives. One initiative was to raise women’s legal status and social positions through family law reform and social policy. (For details, see Chapter 5.) Links between CSOs and political parties continued in the new century.

The death of King Hassan in 1999 and the ascent of his son, Mohammad VI, began a new era for civil society and political society. On the cultural front, the annual International Film Festival of Marrakesh was launched in 2001. Public debates began on the social status and cultural rights of the country’s large Berber community, known as the Amazigh. The *Decree on the Right to Establish Associations* was amended in 2002. As noted in Chapter 2, the Equity and Reconciliation Commission, set up by royal decree in 2004 to hear testimony from victims of the Years of Lead, released its report in 2005. Advances notwithstanding, poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion persisted, healthcare was inaccessible to many, and school enrollments rates were poor. In 2010, youth groups formed an online Facebook group to discuss political reform. They were thus ready to make broader public demands when protests broke out in Tunisia and Egypt, and they created what came to be known as the *Mouvement 20 février* (M20F), which made its appearance on the 20th of February 2011.

Thousands rallied in more than sixty cities and towns. A video went viral of the movement participants – male, female, young and old, speaking in Arabic, French, and Amazigh; in it, they called for good jobs, healthcare, education for all, and cultural rights. Young people associated with the M20F, especially those on the left, received logistical and other support from the French-based anti-globalization network ATTAC.⁵⁰ Zakia Salime describes a press conference that took place at the AMDH offices:⁵¹

The AMDH is headed by Khadija Riyadi, a long-standing human rights and feminist activist. Riyadi opened the conference by introducing Tahani Madad,

⁴⁹ Lintzer and Heni (2017).

⁵⁰ Moghadam interview with M20F activist, Rabat, May 2014.

⁵¹ Salime (2012): 102.

a 19-year-old science student who spoke on behalf of February 20th. Tahani read the movement's memorandum, introduced the various organizational committees and stressed the peaceful character of the protests. She stipulated that "no sectarian, political or religious slogans are authorized" and defined February 20th as a "youth dynamic" that is "secular, modernist (*hadathi*), democratic and independent of all foreign agendas or political affiliations." She concluded by sharing the desire to see the "flag of freedom, equality and social justice reign over Morocco, through peaceful means."

The protests in Tunisia and in Egypt ("neighborhood diffusion") doubtlessly inspired those who took to the streets in Morocco, but Buehler describes a spike in labor contestation in early 2010.⁵² Morocco's civil society – including public-sector unions, human rights groups, youth groups, and women's rights associations – helped shape the nature of the M20F protests, ensuring its nonviolent nature and widespread support for better public services, cultural rights, and more representative government.

The M20F united youth, labor unions, Islamist groups, Amazigh/Berber organizations, and other influential CSOs around the political and socioeconomic grievances, calling for constitutional reforms to limit the King's powers and for more and better quality medical, educational, and welfare services. On March 9, 2011, the King announced an outline for a new constitution and appointed a commission of experts, the *Commission Consultative de Révision de la Constitution*. Political parties, labor unions, and Islamist groups were encouraged to contribute to the new constitution via the *mécanisme de suivi* (monitoring mechanism), a consultative body that included five women and was designed to interface between the Commission and other bodies. Various newspapers from the nationalist *l'Opinion* to the socialist *Liberation* encouraged citizens to vote for the constitutional amendments, which addressed issues raised in the M20F protests: human rights, women's equality, and Amazigh/Berber rights. The M20F "called for more social and economic equality and better social welfare services in the fields of health, education, and housing; but their demands were more specifically focused on political issues."⁵³

⁵² Buehler (2015).

⁵³ Maghraoui and Zerhouni (2014): 700. Salime praises the M20F but faults other CSOs and the feminist organizations for focusing more on political demands than socioeconomic ones. (Personal communication.)

In her review of press accounts, Abdel-Samad shows that most of the protests occurred in February, March, and June, and they continued despite police repression in March and again in May. Realizing that the protests would not subside, the state first sought to appease the movement by creating an Economic Council in addition to increasing salaries and subsidies.⁵⁴ The political elite then began to participate in the reform process. The M20F was invited to participate but declined, leaving the process to political parties. Popular protests continued until the July referendum. Afterwards, with a very high turnout (72.56 percent) and high endorsement (98 percent) of the constitutional changes, and with the institutionalization of the movement's demands, support for the M20F dissipated and the movement itself was divided between those who supported the changes and those who remained unsatisfied.⁵⁵ Although the state retained the upper hand afterwards, Morocco's political system was opened up further to moderate Islamists, and recognition and support of the Amazigh culture followed.⁵⁶ Today, visitors to Morocco's major cities will see signs and tableaux in the official languages of Arabic, French, and Amazigh.

Morocco's National Human Rights Council (CNDH) was reformed in March 2011 to have more prerogatives, a broader mandate, and independence of the government, and it has made available reports in several languages. According to its website, the CNDH is charged with "promoting democracy-building, by fostering broad-based social dialogue and developing any relevant tools and mechanisms to that end." It also examines "laws and regulations in force with the provisions of international human rights conventions and international humanitarian law which the Kingdom has ratified or to which it has acceded, as well as with the concluding observations and recommendations of UN treaty bodies on the reports submitted to them by the Government."⁵⁷ In late 2013, the Council issued a memorandum on "Domestic Workers Employment Conditions," calling on the government to sign the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention (Convention 189) and to align the national law and practice on domestic workers to

⁵⁴ Abdel-Samad (2014): 798–804. ⁵⁵ Ibid.: 803.

⁵⁶ Maddy-Weitzman (2012). ⁵⁷ See www.cndh.ma/en

the Convention as well as to the provisions of the Labor Law on formal employment.⁵⁸ The Council also made recommendations on the government's Violence against Women law, and on human trafficking, vulnerable children, mental health, military justice, and foreigners' human rights.

The M20F protests not only resulted in the constitutional reforms and referendum, but they also expanded the political opportunity structure in Morocco itself, for both civil society and political society, in a far cry from the Years of Lead. Unlike other countries, Morocco's state had the capacity to absorb the demands of the opposition in its polity, with the result that the government's elimination of the popular food and energy subsidies did not meet with protests, because of prior consultations with CSOs, including the trade unions, and compensation with conditional cash transfers.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, discontent continued over socioeconomic problems and unemployment. Protests erupted in the predominantly Amazigh-speaking Rif province after the death of fishmonger Mouhcine Fikri in October 2016, crushed inside a rubbish truck trying to recover fish confiscated by police. Regular protests for the release of all Rif detainees continued, usually taking place in front of the parliament building in Rabat. Other protests in 2019 included medical students opposed to privatization and teachers calling for more stable employment contracts.⁶⁰

Egypt

Egypt has had numerous CSOs, NGOs, and social movement initiatives, including a long history of worker protests, but the state consistently carried out surveillance, harassment, and imprisonment, as documented in Chapter 3. Its authoritarian republican model undermined CSO capacity through a rigged political and judicial system. An effective tool was the Emergency Law, in place since the 1981 assassination of President Sadat and extended every three years by the Mubarak regime. Another means of control was the 2002 law on

⁵⁸ The CNDH Memo to the government on domestic labor is available at https://cndh.ma/sites/default/files/cndh_-_debat_publicue_travail_domestique_uk_.pdf

⁵⁹ Verme et al. (2014).

⁶⁰ Moghadam observed a protest for release of Rif prisoners in December 2017; see also Salime (2019).

NGOs. Unlike Tunisia, the labor movement in Egypt was tightly controlled, and the large trade union, ETUF, was an arm of government, having been established by the Nasser state.

In the years before the Arab Spring, Egypt appeared to have a large and dynamic civil society consisting of numerous charities (Islamic, Coptic, and secular), NGOs, political parties, research institutes, and professional associations. However, all were under the control and supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), which not only insisted on lengthy procedures for registration, but also refused permits to many NGOs, including at least one associated with women's rights. The Law on Associations and Community Foundations (Law 84 of 2002) and a side law issued by MOSA banned political activity and the receipt of foreign funding without government approval. It also granted MOSA the power to dissolve NGOs, restricted the formation and activities of labor unions, and prohibited strikes. Thus, despite the appearance of significant NGO activity, the Mubarak regime severely curbed CSOs. Singerman refers to legal and bureaucratic ambiguities that allowed "the regime flexibility and multiple strategies to pursue its critics, whether they are NGOs, civil companies, media publications, or individual activists." Altan-Olcay and Icduygu discuss a 2006 CIVICUS survey showing that Egyptian participants emphasized the overbearing presence of the state, the persistence of the emergency law and corruption, and the poor skills of public officials as contributing to a restrictive political context for civil society. Abdelrahman notes that MOSA required CSOs to register, refused license applications on vague rationales, merged CSOs in similar areas, and controlled board membership and decision-making. Altan-Olcay and Icduygu explain that the Egyptian government tended to establish its own organizations in fields where it perceived independent NGOs as a threat, notably human rights organizations. This gave MOSA a pretext not to register other independent organizations in the same fields. State power in Egypt, therefore, gave rise to some legal CSOs while curbing and rendering precarious those it considered a threat to the status quo.⁶¹

Autonomous CSOs were often confronted by the authorities. As noted, sociology professor Saad Eddin Ibrahim set up the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Development Studies, which studied democratization and produced

⁶¹ Abdelrahman (2004): 127–31; Altan-Olcay and Icduygu (2012); Singerman 2002: 32. CIVICUS is known as the "global civil society alliance."

a monthly magazine, *Civil Society*, and he was a contributor to the two-volume survey of civil society in the Middle East.⁶² Ibrahim began to encounter the state's annoyance when he advocated expanded rights for Egypt's Christian Coptic community (estimated to be between 10 percent and 15 percent of the country's population), Baha'is and other minority groups. At a time of heightened sectarian tensions and violence, when Islamists targeted the state and Muslim villagers turned on their Christian neighbors, Ibrahim's advocacy was seen to be embarrassing to the Egyptian state's self-image. Ibrahim was arrested, imprisoned, and prosecuted on charges of accepting funds from the EU for election monitoring and of defaming Egypt. Between 2000 and 2003 he was tried three times and finally released from prison. He continued to call for political changes and the release of political prisoners, such as Ayman Nour, a former parliamentarian and founder of the *Ghad* (Tomorrow) Party, which had been part of the Kefaya movement (see below). In 2008 Ibrahim faced charges again but was out of the country and thus escaped another prison term.

Dissatisfaction with the economic model of privatization that was introduced in the 1990s heightened growing political and economic grievances. In their separate writings, Bayat and Singerman described the "everyday forms of resistance" and "social non-movements" of ordinary citizens, who crafted survival strategies to improve their living conditions.⁶³ These were responses to the state's failure to provide minimal services and goods such as healthcare, electricity, running water, and affordable basic foodstuffs. Poor quality public services and the high cost of private services affected low-income citizens the most, but middle-class and working-class citizens also experienced unemployment, deteriorating incomes, and the effects of changes to the labor law. Labor mobilizations took place in the early part of the new century, especially after the enactment of the 2003 Unified Labour Law, and women workers participated in the worker protests of 2006–08. In 2008, Pratt shows, the New Woman Foundation initiated a project to highlight working-class women's conditions and support demands for workplace improvements.⁶⁴

⁶² Ibrahim (1995); Norton (1995, 1996). ⁶³ Bayat (2010); Singerman (1995).

⁶⁴ Abdelrahman (2012); Beinini (2010, 2014); Durac (2015); Pratt (2012).

The second Palestinian Intifada generated Egyptian solidarity networks that paved the way for mobilizations against the 2003 Iraq War, which included a massive sit-in in Tahrir Square on March 20, 2003. Groups of leftists, Islamists, and nationalists then formed a series of conferences that saw the participation of other Arabs as well as international left-wing groups such as the US-based ANSWER and UK-based Stop the War coalitions.⁶⁵ Egyptian anti-globalization activists also took part in the first few years of the WSF. In turn, the networks launched a new movement for political change, called Kefaya, which opposed the extension of President Mubarak's mandate for another term in 2005 and the planned succession by his son, Gamal. An active blogosphere emerged, which continued even after the end of Kefaya and street demonstrations, in which young Egyptians began writing about political, social, and personal issues, oppositional activities, and police brutality. One impressive initiative was the online political watchdog, *Shayfeen.com* ("we are watching you"), formed by three women professionals in the aftermath of the rigged presidential election of 2005 to monitor the parliamentary elections of 2006. The documentary film *Egypt: We Are Watching You* tells their story and reveals the extent of voter fraud and complicity of the judiciary, footage of which was captured by the activists and broadcast on their website.⁶⁶

The Kefaya movement started in late 2004, mobilizing the oppositional urban middle class and young people using blogs and later Facebook in support of workers, electoral change, and more political transparency. Kefaya's activists took part in demonstrations, signed petitions, and launched blogs to call for freedom of expression and human rights. They were met with crackdowns by the regime, but their activism continued even after the 2005 presidential election. This youth mobilization gave birth to the April 6 Youth Movement that began in 2008, whose first activity was a national strike on April 6, 2008 in support of workers' rights, specifically to support the workers in El-Mahalla El-Kubra, an industrial town, who were planning to strike on the 6th of April.⁶⁷ After the fatal police beating of a young blogger in Alexandria, young people created the "We are all Khaled Said" Facebook page to mobilize the public. Through both online and

⁶⁵ Abdelrahman (2009); Pratt (2012); Schemm (2003).

⁶⁶ Manjou and Elkarsha (2007). ⁶⁷ Clark and Khatib (2017): 173.

off-line activities, including a stirring online appeal by one Asma Mahfouz,⁶⁸ the April 6 Youth Movement played a key role in mobilizing people for the January 25 protest that formed the start of the Egyptian uprising and the removal of Mubarak.

In terms of the composition of the 2011 uprising, Beinín identifies three preexisting “parallel Egyptian social movements” that undergirded the 2011 protests: the workers movement, the oppositional urban middle class, and the youth movement. Abdelrahman refers to loosely organized “pro-democracy” networks of students, political activists, youth, and professionals operating outside of formal institutions, as well as the more spontaneous and “dispersed” “pro-citizenship” protests by marginalized citizens that swept Egyptian streets. Durac lists a range of protesters, mostly youth groups of various movements or political parties: Kefaya, the Tomorrow Party, the Democratic Front Party, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the leftist Tagammu Party, the Nasserite Party, the Popular Movement for Democratic Change, the Labour Party, the Wafd Party, and the Front of Coptic Youth.⁶⁹ The 28th of January – the “Day of Rage” – saw MB mobilization of its numerous followers to confront the security forces. Durac points out that the Hisham Mubarak Law Center was providing meeting space for the April 6 Youth Movement as well as medical and legal aid to the protesters. But almost immediately after Mubarak’s resignation, violence erupted against protesters and especially the women among them, perpetrated by the police, military, and gangs of men in Tahrir Square. (See Chapter 5 for details.) As Chapter 3 detailed, the repression of protesting citizens was severe. The Morsi government, which had come to power after the June 2012 elections, had delegated extraordinary powers to itself and especially to the president. This and other serious missteps led to renewed protests – this time against Morsi and the MB’s growing power, leading to the July 2013 military coup.

Scholars have identified several weaknesses in Egypt’s civil society (and political society) that may help explain why the 2011 uprising first culminated in MB rule and then was taken over by the military in its July 2013 coup. Nathan Brown highlights the multiple elections in the first two years, which suggested a kind of political ineptitude. In an

⁶⁸ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgiIgMdsEuk

⁶⁹ Abdelrahman 2012; Beinín (2014); Durac 2015.

early study, Abdelrahman took issue with the celebratory view of civil society in general and that of Egypt in particular, arguing that the many NGOs that had emerged could in no way be considered separate from the state, politically autonomous, or capable of democratization. Egypt's civil society, she argued, was "a contested terrain characterized by authoritarian and repressive tendencies. . . . [They are] often actively engaged in reproducing unequal relations and an unjust status quo rather than providing alternatives to existing systems of power." Altan-Olcay and Icduygu agree, pointing out that active membership and leadership in Egyptian CSOs were confined to a small segment of society, insulated from the widespread problems of the majority. In the CIVICUS survey that they analyze, they note that the stakeholders described the leadership in terms of "older men, with high socioeconomic status." As Moghadam had noted, poor women and rural-based citizens were not members but rather were typically at the receiving end of programs. The survey participants attributed this to the lack of values such as trust, public spiritedness, and interest in collectivity. Echoing Abdelrahman, Altan-Olcay and Icduygu conclude that Egyptian CSOs replicated power inequalities and networks of privilege and could not be agents of change.⁷⁰

Abdelrahman's 2004 analysis of the gaps and fragmentation of the opposition movement in pre-uprising Egypt anticipates the breakdown of the movements that subsequently drove the uprisings of 2011 but also resulted in their defeat. Activists may have been skillful at organizing protests, but they failed at election campaigns.⁷¹ The 1990s battle against Mubarak's privatization drive did not benefit workers or the labor movement; rather, the MB used that opportunity to build a parallel public and economic sphere in the 1980s and 1990s, enabling them to dominate the political scene after Mubarak's resignation.⁷² The Morsi government and the MB were hardly architects of a new economic model of social justice, having accepted an IMF loan and attendant conditions. Indeed, they began to remove subsidies and clamp down on the independent trade unions that were forming.⁷³ In

⁷⁰ Abdelrahman (2004): 1; Altan-Olcay and Icduygu (2012); Brown (2013); Moghadam (1998b).

⁷¹ Kandil (2012); Tripp (2013).

⁷² Beinin (2010); Wickham (2013). See also Posusney (1997).

⁷³ Kienle (2015): 23–4.

contrast to the way that subsidies were reformed in Morocco, there was no civil society consultative process in Egypt.

Civil Society Underdevelopment: Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Yemen

Bahrain

Like many MENA countries, Bahrain saw the emergence of left-wing and youth movements which later helped constitute civil society and political society. Bahrain's Federation of Trade Unions demanded both economic and political rights, but the associations and demands were largely repressed.⁷⁴ After 1959, the Bahraini government mandated that all social institutions – clubs, societies, associations – register with the government. It restricted their diffusion and participation to localized towns and villages and prevented meaningful political activities. Issued by royal decree, the 1989 Associations Law No. 21 placed strict limitations on civic engagement and prohibited CSOs from engaging in politics.⁷⁵ The restrictive laws seem to have adversely affected left-wing and Shi'a-dominated parties and associations, as well as women's organizations, more than the Sunni Islamist parties and associations. Fadel writes of labor uprisings in 1965 and 1972, along with the rise of associations and unions of workers, women, and students, whose demands were rights-based and professional. However, the movements were subsequently affected "by the growing religious tide and the emergence of political Islam, particularly after the Iranian revolution, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist bloc, and the tyranny of globalization." She adds that Article 18 of Law No. 21 on civil associations prohibited CSOs from engaging in politics.⁷⁶

In the early 1990s, Bahrain experienced some political liberalization and a key figure that emerged during that period was Dr. Mounira Fakhro, a leftist, feminist, and professor at the University of Bahrain, who signed the 1994 Popular Petition calling for the restoration of the parliament and the 1973 constitution.⁷⁷ This was followed by another petition in 1995 signed by 350 women calling for the restoration of

⁷⁴ Langohr (2014). ⁷⁵ Ahmed (2010): 77; Crystal (1996); Fadel (2019).

⁷⁶ Fadel (2019): 96.

⁷⁷ See https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1994_Popular_Petition_for_Reforms_to_Amir_of_Bahrain

democracy and an end to torture. When Dr. Fakhro refused to withdraw her name, she was fired from her university position, which generated an international petition drive for her reinstatement.⁷⁸ King Hamad's 1999 accession to the throne was followed by a general amnesty for political prisoners and exiles. Fakhro was restored to her job, and the exiled leader of the former Popular Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, now called the National Democratic Action Society (NDA), was allowed back. The NDA declared that it would take part in the 2002 municipal elections, but it suffered a disappointing result when none of its candidates was elected in any constituency. The Party boycotted that year's parliamentary elections but took part in the 2006 parliamentary elections; among its candidates was its vice president, Fakhro. By this time, the NDA had renamed itself *Wa'ad* ("Promise"). Fakhro's candidacy was welcomed by the Bahraini Shi'a community but opposed by the Islamist party Islah.

Fakhro's international reputation and her prominence in Bahrain led to her appointment by the King's wife, Sheikha Sabeeka bint Ibrahim al-Khalifa, to the Advisory Board of the Supreme Council for Women. Fakhro argued that the attainment of women's rights is a core component of democracy: "You cannot separate democracy from other women's causes I believe that men and women should work together – for women or men or the whole society. We have so many men who believe in such issues (women's rights), who work with us either at the university as scholars or at the political association." Her views on women's rights meant that she clashed with Islamists over their opposition to a unified law to protect women's rights: "Religious leaders are against the family law. I am against two separate laws for the Sunni and Shi'a – we will be separated more." She also supported democracy and political pluralism.⁷⁹

In 2010, nearly half the parliament was controlled by al-Wefaq, an opposition group that catered to the large Shi'a population. Bahrain is about 70 percent Shi'a, and yet Shi'a nationals remain second-class citizens. Many Bahrainis of Persian ancestry are denied full citizenship rights and passports, despite their families having lived in Bahrain for several generations, which prompted the 2011 protests at the Pearl

⁷⁸ The petition to support Dr. Fakhro was led in part by the US-based Association for Middle East Women's Studies.

⁷⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Munira_Fakhro

Roundabout.⁸⁰ The only political groups to support the February 2011 uprising were the secular left-nationalist Wa‘ad and the Shi‘i political society al-Wefaq.⁸¹ Fakhro played a leading role as an organizer and spokesperson for the demonstrations, calling for reform and a government that was “not Sunni, nor Shi‘a, but Bahraini.” The Bahraini protest movement presented itself as nonsectarian and in favor of democracy, constitutional monarchy, and human rights, but the regime quickly branded it as Iran-influenced. Fadel writes that the protest movement’s political rhetoric ranged from demands for constitutional reform to calls to overthrow the regime and institute a republican system. State media contributed to sectarianization, however, deploying “extremist rhetoric in depicting the opposition as if it was an Iranian project. . . . As a result, we saw the emergence of ‘al-Fateh group’, a Sunni reactionary counter-protest movement.”⁸² Qatari-owned Al-Jazeera and Saudi-owned Al-Arabiyya, which televised protests in all other Arab countries, chose to ignore the Bahraini protests, much less the military intervention, especially in its Arabic programming.⁸³

Following international pressure, the establishment of a “Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry” under the chairmanship of legal scholar Cherif Bassiouni was announced. The Bassiouni commission noted that the government used the Bahraini penal code to punish the opposition and deter it politically:

The committee has a number of concerns about the inconsistency of the application of these provisions with international and human rights law, and with the provisions of the constitution of Bahrain, and that Article 165 of the penal code was applied in violation of the freedom of opinion and expressions . . . against opinions supporting peaceful change to the structure of the government or its regime.⁸⁴

The government crackdown on civic, labor, and political organizations following the 2011 protests further undermined civil society and impeded reform efforts. A Wikileaks document outlined restrictions on democracy-promoting Western NGOs and on CSOs, including the Bahrain Human Rights Society; Bahrain Centre for Human Rights; Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society; Bahrain Transparency

⁸⁰ Mecham (2014): 352.

⁸¹ Human Rights Watch (2013a); Jamal and Khatib (2014).

⁸² Fadel (2019): 98. ⁸³ Herb (2017): 654. ⁸⁴ Cited in Fadel (2019): 99.

Society; Migrant Workers Protection; Bahrain Women's Union; Bahrain Businesswomen's Society; Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights; Bahrain Youth Forum Society; and Environmental Friends Society. Other NGOs were Al-Shebabiya and Bahrain Youth Democratic Society.⁸⁵ In June 2017, Wa'ad was banned on spurious terrorism charges; the ban was criticized by Amnesty International and Bahrain's Institute for Rights and Democracy, with Lynn Maalouf of Amnesty International calling it "a flagrant attack on freedom of expression and association."⁸⁶ In November 2018 al-Wefaq was banned and its leader Ali Salman imprisoned "on trumped-up charges of spying for Qatar."⁸⁷

Libya

The undeveloped nature of Libya's civil society paralleled that of the country's political institutions. Oil wealth as well as the idiosyncratic *Green Book/Jamahiriyya* ideology enabled the Qaddafi regime to rule through informal mechanisms rather than through modern political institutions, reinforcing tribalism.⁸⁸ Qaddafi's "revolutionary" ideology was also Islamic, which arguably helped entrench conservative and religious attitudes, behaviors, and norms. In addition, many Libyans joined the so-called Islamic *jihad* in Afghanistan in the 1980s and early 1990s. These features of Libya's state and society may help explain both the violent nature of the Libyan uprising and the chaotic aftermath.

Hyper-centralization under Qaddafi's rule blocked contestation and dissidence from tribal elites, the westernized bourgeoisie, bureaucrats, merchants, the religious *ulema*, student groups, and other social groups. Legislative and institutional constraints to civil society development included a 1972 law prohibiting the existence of associations unsanctioned by the government.⁸⁹ Law No. 19 of 2001 restricted the formation of NGOs in the country by stalling their registration, forcing civic associations to obtain approval from the state's security sectors, and mandating the presence of government officials in the governing

⁸⁵ See *Telegraph*, "Bahraini Civil Society Organizations, 2011," www.telegraph.co.uk/news/wikileaks-files/bahrain-wikileaks-cables/8334602/BAHRAINI-CIVIL-SOCIETY-ORGANIZATIONS.html

⁸⁶ McKernan (2017). ⁸⁷ *The Economist* (2018): 42. ⁸⁸ Kadlec (2014).

⁸⁹ Hinnebusch (1984); Pargeter (2010).

bodies of CSOs. Any burgeoning CSOs were co-opted by Qaddafi's son Saif al-Islam through his personal charities, and by his daughter Aisha, who led the Watassimu foundation.⁹⁰ Libyan authorities did not permit independent organizations or political groups to exist; membership in any group or organization not sanctioned by the state was punishable by death under Law No. 71 of 1972.⁹¹ One survey found that many Libyans were resorting to *salafism* and young people were turning to religion; Libyans also mobilized within their communities and tribal networks.⁹²

Durac notes that as in other countries, the 2011 protesters represented a broad cross-section of society united by the desire to see the end of the Qaddafi regime, initially dominated by young people who formed the 17 February Youth Movement. Largely composed of young, urban, middle-class Libyans with higher education, the youth movement claimed to have around 100 NGOs under its umbrella, and its platform revolved around eliminating corruption and bringing the voice of the people into government. The composition broadened to include some military figures and conscripts, professionals, civil servants, a range of exiled groups, tribal groups in Cyrenaica who had resented Qaddafi's rule, and Berbers and other ethnic minorities who opposed Qadhafi's Arabization. The Islamist opposition included the Libyan Islamic Group, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, and others, who became part of "an alliance of strange bedfellows built around a single purpose – the removal of Qaddafi" but with little agreement on how Libyan society should be organized when that had been achieved.⁹³

By all accounts, there was no civil society prior to 2011. The MB and its offshoots – the Libyan Islamic fighting Group and the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change – operated clandestinely, while exiles maintained organizations from abroad.⁹⁴ After Qaddafi's death an array of CSOs emerged in Libya, but with the 2014 security breakdown, many CSOs became inactive and many of the activists fled the country. In post-Qaddafi Libya, the combination of militia groups, NGO organizational incapacity, political marginalization at the federal level, and

⁹⁰ Foundation for the Future (2011).

⁹¹ Pargeter (2010): 285, in Kelly and Breslin (2010).

⁹² Al-Werfalli (2011): 157–8; Kadlec (2014): 644.

⁹³ Durac (2015): 249; see also ICG (2011). ⁹⁴ Kadlec (2014): 648.

a weak legal framework blocked the development of a modern civil society conducive to democratization.

Syria

As in many Arab countries, all charitable organizations in Syria required official patronage. Under the Private Associations and Institutions Act (No. 93 of 1958), an association's charter and purpose had to be approved by MOSA and Labor. The Syrian regime "forged a set of state-society relations that buttressed its rule by fragmenting society on the one hand, while forging binding relations with key social groups on the other."⁹⁵

Although the 1973 constitution's Article 39 guaranteed the right to protest freely and Article 48 allowed for the formation of "unionist, social, professional organizations, and production cooperatives," Article 49 stipulated conformity to the principles of the Ba'th Party, its ideology, and its social and economic organization.⁹⁶ Initially, Syria's position on women's roles in society echoed the prevailing socialist and Third Worldist patterns; communist women's groups and the Syrian Women's Union – incorporated into the Ba'th Party in 1968 to become the General Women's Union – were the primary channels for women's mobilization. Keddie maintains that the Ba'th Party sought to institutionalize measures to guarantee equality between men and women, strengthen women's education, and decrease illiteracy rates. But Hinnebusch argues that government-organized *munazamat sha'biyah*, or popular organizations of youth, peasants, and women, reduced social and civic autonomy. This did not, however, prevent the growth of the MB, which launched a violent uprising in 1978–82 against what it called the "Alawite regime"; it also "denounced Ba'ath socialism as Marxist and hence atheist." The MB was in turn violently repressed, with the killing of about 20,000 people in Hama, the MB stronghold. Hinnebusch writes that after the repression, "a less politicized, less oppositional Islamization from below thereafter proceeded, tolerated by the regime..."⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Haddad and Wind (2014): 398.

⁹⁶ International Constitutional Law (Syria), www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/sy00000_.html

⁹⁷ Hinnebusch (2014): 774, 791. See also Hinnebusch (1993).

The Damascus Spring that followed the inauguration of Bashar al-Assad seemed to augur a new era. Intellectuals, lawyers, and advocates of various kinds signed declarations demanding that the government end the 1963 marital law decree; pardon and release all political prisoners; establish rule of law and guarantee the freedom of assembly, expression, and press; and lift legal restrictions and state-surveillance of public life.⁹⁸ The Human Rights Association of Syria was formed along with some 200 discussion clubs and forums representing various social and political groups. Opposition parties could operate, and two independent magazines, *al-Dumari* and *al-Iqtisadiyya*, came into being, although they were soon disbanded. Even after the collapse of the Damascus Spring, a broad coalition known as the Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change united liberal, Islamist, and Kurdish activists around a 2005 manifesto calling for peaceful democratic reforms. Activists associated with that group as well as with the Jamal al-Atassi Forum for National Dialogue were arrested.⁹⁹ Haddad and Wind describe the presence and activities of Syria's various communist groups as splintered, with several operating as a tacit "loyal opposition" in that they called for reform rather than regime change. Several other hardline groups, however, preferred to ally themselves with Islamist groups.¹⁰⁰

The government continued a strategy of fostering moderate Islam, resulting in the spread of Islamic schools and charities, conservative attire, and mosque attendance.¹⁰¹ The *ulema* were permitted to manage the Islamic financial institutions allowed by the regime to attract Gulf money. Assad's coming to terms with the Islamic establishment may have been a way to counter criticism of the "Alawite regime" but, as Hinnebusch suggests, the erosion of secularism may have manifested itself in the Islamist complexion of much of the uprising starting in 2011. In addition, Bashar al-Assad's move away from his father's statist economic model and adoption of a more liberalized economy, including the removal of subsidies, combined with the terrible drought of 2007–10, generated much popular discontent. The 2011 uprising initially led to renewed gestures of reform to accommodate opposition

⁹⁸ Alvarez-Ossorio (2012). ⁹⁹ Kelly and Breslin (2010): 477.

¹⁰⁰ Haddad and Wind (2014): 402.

¹⁰¹ Hinnebusch (2017): 791, 792. Moghadam made two visits to Syria prior to the 2011 uprising. In contrast to her 2004 Damascus visit, she observed widespread religious attire during her 2008 visit.

groups, including a new constitution adopted in 2012, but the peaceful protests had turned violent as early as June 2011 and were met with state-sponsored violence. Haddad and Wind argue that when the uprising began, “there were barely any independent organizations, or anything approaching civil society.”¹⁰² The opposition movement thus quickly radicalized and morphed into an Islamist uprising, with the support of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Western powers. The internationalized civil conflict impeded the expansion of an independent civil society, let alone a peaceful resolution. It enabled the emergence of the “Islamic State” (2015–19), and helped fracture the country.

Yemen

Social activism in Yemen began when groups mobilized against colonial powers and ruling elites, notably in the south from 1967 onwards. In the socialist south, known as the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), the General Union of Yemeni Women, formed in 1968, mobilized women and was active in monitoring and promoting the unusually egalitarian family law. (See Chapter 5.) A women’s conference held ten years after the family law sought to assess the progress it had made for women legally and socially. It was acknowledged that many women had indeed benefited from the government’s policies and especially the family law, but that cultural values and norms remained conservative and more time would be needed for all women to be integrated into economic and political life.¹⁰³ Further cultural change was blocked when North and South Yemen united in 1990 and the Socialist Party was nearly decimated by the mini-civil war of 1994.

The initial opening of political space after the 1990 unification saw limited growth of quasi-governmental and private associations typically linked to dominant political parties and political factions in the country; they included voluntary associations, religious charities and welfare associations, student groups and professional syndicates, literary and human rights groups, tribal conferences and scholarly conventions. In her identification of three periods of civic activity in Yemen, Sheila Carapico describes self-help development initiatives,

¹⁰² Haddad and Wind (2014): 409; Hinnebusch (2017): 798.

¹⁰³ Dahlgren (2010), ch. 4; Molyneux (1985).

conferences, and pressures for human rights – which invariably met with police repression. Although Law 25 of 1990 guaranteed the “freedom of knowledge, thought, the press, expression, communication, and access to information,” along with independent media and protection for journalists and authors, the regime limited implementation of those rights if they were deemed prejudicial to “Islam, national security, national unity, criminal investigations, and political deliberations, economic trends, or the president.”¹⁰⁴ In 2007, Yemen’s MOSA counted some 5,400 registered CSOs, many of which were inactive.¹⁰⁵

In her three-country study of Islamic social institutions, Janine Clark argued that they were run by and for the middle classes. Given widespread illiteracy and poverty, however, the Yemeni middle class was certainly a very small population; its growth was stymied in part by the government’s enormous military spending – fully 7 percent of GDP in 2002 and 2003, and 4.4 percent in 2008.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the social networks that Islamic charities and associations created bound their clients to them while also diffusing Islamic, and often Islamist, notions of governance and personal behavior. The Islah Women’s Charitable Society in Yemen, for example, was arguably responsible for the diffusion of heavy veiling. Its activities, as well as those of the Islah Party in the years before the 2011 demonstrations, helped catapult Islah to a prominent role in the 2011 uprising. Jillian Schwedler found that Yemen’s Islah Party retained a radical Islamist outlook and agenda, whereas Jordan’s had moderated.¹⁰⁷ As the best-organized of Yemen’s political parties, it was poised to take a leading role, although its plans were thwarted by the conflicts that broke out.

Durac explains that the 2011 protesters challenging the long-standing regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh were predominantly young. On February 11, after al-Jazeera broadcast the scenes from Cairo that followed Mubarak’s departure from office, hundreds of Yemeni students, teachers, and political activists gathered in front of Sana’a University to demand political change in the country. The protest camp in Sana’a covered approximately a square mile at its peak in early May and housed over 10,000 people, around half of whom were young representatives of the country’s prodemocracy movements unaffiliated with the established political parties. In March 2011, an

¹⁰⁴ Carapico (1998): 138; see also Yom (2005): 23. ¹⁰⁵ Phillips (2017): 908.

¹⁰⁶ See <http://militarybudget.org/yemen/> ¹⁰⁷ Clark (2004); Schwedler (2006).

umbrella network – the Civil Coalition of Revolutionary Youth – included newly-formed groups such as the Alliance for the Youth’s Revolution, the Alliance of the People’s Youth Revolution, the Alliance of Youth and Students for a Peaceful Revolution, and the Coalition of Change Leaders. Like the youth protesters elsewhere in the region, they cooperated among themselves and with others but were reluctant to nominate leaders or to form political parties.¹⁰⁸

In Yemen as elsewhere in the region, regime violence against the youth protesters altered the balance of opposition forces. The Joint Meetings Party (JMP) – a coalition of opposition parties including the Yemeni Socialist Party, Islah, Arab nationalists, and smaller Shi’a Zaydi parties – offered to mediate between the protesters and the government, but violent attacks on protesters led the JMP leadership to instruct its supporters to join the uprising. The uprising was eventually supported by two regionally based movements that had posed a long-standing threat to the regime in Sana’a. One was the Houthi movement, which originated in Saada in northern Yemen and fought six battles with President Saleh’s regime between 2004 and 2010. The Houthis announced their support for the uprising on the same day that the JMP withdrew from dialogue with the government. The second was the southern-based Hirak, which had emerged in 2007. By the summer of 2011, therefore, Saleh was opposed by all the major opposition parties, defectors from his own party, senior figures in the tribal confederation to which his family owed allegiance, regional actors, and the youth movements that had initiated the protests.¹⁰⁹ Some observers have argued that Yemen’s incipient civil society groups operating through the JMPs played a critical role in Saleh’s transition from power and helped create space for previously excluded and marginalized leftist intellectuals and politicians. NGOs mushroomed; many became recipients of large foreign grants and aid to bolster their initiatives and activism, and the new government outlined its commitment to the promotion, prioritization, and protection of civic associations in a CSO Partnership Framework. Yemen’s fragmentation and ensuing conflicts, however, along with its underdeveloped political institutions

¹⁰⁸ Durac (2015): 248, 265.

¹⁰⁹ Durac (2015); Phillips (2017). See also www.eurasiareview.com/13072020-the-houthi-art-of-war-why-they-keep-winning-in-yemen-analysis/

and economic structures, prevented the emergence of a thriving civil society and new public sphere.¹¹⁰

Groups of progressive-minded young Yemenis continue to gather for dialogues and creativity. The al-Nasieh Club in Aden “rejects racism, fanaticism, religious extremism and social seclusion” and seeks to revive cultural life.¹¹¹ One young woman activist has declared that women should lead Yemen in the future, and she regrets having voted “for the one-man show” [Hadi] in 2012.¹¹² Such young people in Yemen’s incipient civil society have the support of many within global civil society, who demand that their own governments stop sending arms to the Saudis and Emiratis and instead use resources to end the conflict and help reconstruct the country.

Conclusions

The normative view of civil society as essential to democratization should not be abandoned in favor of an expansive, catchall definition that includes all manner of NGOs, religious organizations, social-service providers, and affinity groups. What is required is a close examination of grievances, goals, and strategies of CSOs. Social bases and grassroots connections matter, but these have been largely enjoyed by state-affiliated organizations and Islamist organizations. In an authoritarian context, genuine CSOs have limited leverage, resources, and capacity. The many associations “allowed” to emerge and proliferate in the 1990s, during political and economic liberalization, did so under severe legal constraints. CSOs, NGOs, and political organizations arose in conditions of authoritarianism, with varying degrees of capacity for maneuver. As the literature documents, CSOs were often tied up in bureaucratic and legal red tape when not subjected to surveillance and prosecution.

Nonetheless, movements to establish responsive government that emanate from organized groups of citizens – in informal networks or formal associations of professionals, trade unionists, feminists, environmentalists, or human rights advocates – do constitute serious challenges to the authoritarian state and its associated business and political allies. In an

¹¹⁰ Abdul-ahad (2013); al-Muslimi (2013); Transfeld (2014); UNDP (2014).

¹¹¹ See www.almadaniyamag.com/english/2017/7/25/al-nasieh-club-in-aden-a-civil-breeze-in-the-face-of-the-artillery-of-war-and-intolerance

¹¹² www.almadaniyamag.com/english/2017/7/20/ana-insan-madani-with-rasha-jarhum

authoritarian context, therefore, CSOs challenge rather than legitimize government, hence the many legal and political restrictions that they faced in the past and continue to do so in most MENA countries. But as our case studies show, civil society appeared to be most robust in Tunisia, which is why CSOs were able to play such prominent roles in 2011 and especially in the politically charged and highly contentious summer of 2013. As such, Gramsci's observations on civil society remain remarkably valid. In countries with a tradition of strong CSOs, the weakening of the state through revolution, war, or crisis would not necessarily portend societal collapse. Rather, when the state "trembled, a strong structure of civil society was at once revealed." Gramsci contrasted this resilience with countries where "civil society was primordial and gelatinous."¹¹³

Aarts and Cavatorta maintain that "both in Tunisia and Egypt most opposition parties and civil society groups were only tangentially involved" in the anti-regime protests, and that the "majority of the activism that led to the uprisings occurred outside formal and traditional groups." Even if this argument were valid, it would not explain why Tunisia's protest movement ended more positively than Egypt's. This chapter has shown the different trajectories of civil society and its organizations in the two countries, as well as in Morocco, Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen. Echoing those who have given short shrift to the efforts of CSOs, Lisa Anderson states that most of the Arab Spring protesters were not liberal supporters of the rule of law.¹¹⁴ In Tunisia they were, as were the activists in the *mouvement 20 février* in Morocco, the young people in Tahrir Square, and arguably the Bahraini activists. Yet, Anderson's point is valid in connection with the apparently overwhelming presence of right-wing Islamists in other cases. Popular protests morphed into right-wing, patriarchal, jihadist rebellions, notably in Libya and Syria, and in Yemen as well. And in Egypt, first the democratic elections resulted in votes for Islamist parties, and then the military – a hitherto highly popular Egyptian institution – usurped power in summer 2013, leading to authoritarian reversal.

Chapter 5 examines an especially dynamic segment of civil society in many countries, which in this book we regard as a determining factor in the nature of the 2011 Arab uprisings, their course, and their outcomes – women's movements.

¹¹³ Gramsci, cited in Hoare and Smith (1971): 238.

¹¹⁴ Aarts and Cavatorta (2013): 8, 9; Anderson (2018): 484.

5 *Gender Relations and Women's Mobilizations*

This chapter seeks to show not only how women were affected by the Arab Spring protests, especially in the months and years afterwards, but also how gender relations and women's mobilizations shaped the nature of the protests and the aftermath. Gender relations and women's mobilizations refer to women's legal status and social positions; their visibility, influence, and presence in the public sphere and public space; and the presence or absence of pro-women policies and programs. In Muslim-majority countries, the nature of family law, whether it is patriarchal or relatively liberal, is an important dimension of this variable. We begin with a synopsis of the feminist literature to show how changes in legal status and social positions, and in particular, women's collective action and mobilizations, could influence the course and outcomes of protest movements and political change.

According to the WomanStats Project, patriarchy and gender inequality are positively associated with both national and interstate conflicts. In the developing world, higher levels of gender inequality correlate with civil conflict; among rich countries, those with less gender equality experience more within-country violence and a propensity to initiate or support war internationally. It follows that we can expect less violent conflict when women have a strong presence in civil society and in political society, and it is more likely that the course and consequences of political protests and transitions will be relatively women-friendly.¹ A corollary is that militarism or military

¹ Caprioli (2000, 2005); Hudson, Caprioli, et al. (2008/09); Hudson (2010); Hudson, Ballif-Spanvill, et al. (2014); Nagel (2020). The authors are part of the WomanStats Project, a community of researchers and a database. Deploying indicators such as sexual violence, sex trafficking and prostitution, family law, polygamy, brideprice, genital mutilation, sex-selective abortion, and female infanticide, along with many other indicators, and distinguishing between the law and practice, the database provides scales on women's physical security that researchers have found to correlate with intra-state and interstate violence. See www.womanstats.org

spending is negatively correlated with gender equality; countries with higher military spending tend to do worse on gender equality measures.² Research also confirms that women's autonomous organizing in civil society accounts for women-friendly social policies. Since the 1970s, feminist advocacy and activism have been especially influential in the worldwide adoption by states of laws on violence against women.³ MENA scholars similarly have focused on the interplay of women's rights mobilizations and state policy.⁴ We can therefore expect legal and policy changes to occur when women have a relatively strong presence in civil society and allies in political society. In turn, women's capacity to organize, mobilize, and effect positive change for women's rights suggests important structural and cultural changes in a country, along with their likelihood to join prodemocracy movements. Women may or may not need democracy to flourish, but democracy without women is either partial or male-biased or, in some cases, impossible. Chapter 2 showed, however, that democracy has risks as well as benefits. Women can lose out in democratization processes when conservative forces come to power and enact changes to women's preexisting reproductive rights and other social rights, such as occurred in a number of Central and Eastern Europe during and after the transition from socialism to capitalism in the early 1990s.⁵ A sustained democratization requires a modern and vigilant civil society, along with a strong feminine presence in both civil society and political society. It also requires a supportive global environment.

Women's Rights and Mobilizations in Global Context

Since the middle of the twentieth century, significant changes have occurred in the characteristics of the MENA female population, but women also have encountered obstacles to continued progress. The positive changes are increases in female educational attainment, the growing presence of women in public spaces, the entry of women into an array of professional fields, the rising age at first marriage, declining fertility rates and smaller family size, and the spread of women's rights

² Elveren and Moghadam (2019). ³ Htun and Weldon (2012, 2018).

⁴ Al-Ali (2000); Arat (1994); Charrad (1997, 2001); Moghadam (1998a, 1998b, 2003b, 2011); Moghadam and Gheytauchi (2010); Salime (2011); Tchaicha and Arfaoui (2012).

⁵ See Moghadam (2013b), ch. 7, and (2013c); Wejnert (2014).

organizations across the region. In some cases, these changes were the legacy of the “state feminism” of certain modernizing regimes, which also could be regarded as part of the “authoritarian bargain.”⁶ Regimes involved women in state-building, development, and modernization projects (albeit within limits) and they established what the UN later called the “national women’s machinery,” or state-affiliated policy agencies tasked partly with adhering to UN mandates and partly with mobilizing a population of loyal female citizens. In some cases, governments followed the socialist model of state-funded women’s organizations. Tunisia’s *Union nationale des femmes Tunisiennes* (UNFT) was formed in the years following independence, and by 1960, its membership had reached some 40,000; its function was to mobilize women as a social base for the Neo-Destour Party and to carry out Bourguiba’s modernizing projects.⁷

Egypt under Nasser (1956–70) and Tunisia under Bourguiba (1956–87) were regarded as quintessential “state-feminist” MENA regimes, but the two differed in that Muslim Family Law was retained in Egypt, with the result that women’s participation and rights were more circumscribed there than in Tunisia. In the 1970s and 1980s, women in the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY, the socialist South) were given an array of legal rights in the country’s socialist constitution and its emancipatory family law. A poor country with limited resources, the PDRY nonetheless produced a generation of women with aspirations for wider societal participation, rights, and leadership.⁸ The UN’s first conference on women (Mexico City, 1975) saw Arab participation, and the UN’s Decade for Women (1976–85) helped diffuse the growing “women and development” paradigm, a precursor to the broader global women’s rights agenda. Arab women who had been beneficiaries of the educational opportunities afforded by state-building and modernization took part in those conferences, made connections, and returned to their countries with heightened awareness of the need for change. Coupled with women sympathetic to left-wing movements and the Palestinian cause, a new generation of politically and socially aware women emerged with incipient feminist inclinations. They were ready for the new

⁶ On state feminism, see Charrad and Zarrugh (2014); Hatem (1992, 1994); Joseph (2000); Tchaicha and Arfaoui (2017). On the authoritarian bargain, see Chaudhry (2004).

⁷ Murphy (1999): 141. ⁸ Lackner (1985, 2017); Molyneux (1985, 1987).

opportunity of political liberalization in the late 1980s and early 1990s, however circumscribed it turned out to be.

Democracy diffusion projects following the collapse of the Soviet bloc saw several MENA states embarking on a strategy of limited and managed political liberalization. In this context, an array of women's rights organizations was able to emerge across the Arab region: professional associations; women-in-development non-governmental organizations (NGOs); development research centers and women's studies institutes; women's rights or feminist organizations; and the more traditional service or charitable organizations as well as the women's sections of trade unions and political parties. The organizations all appeared in authoritarian contexts, but they became particularly prominent in the Maghreb countries, where anti-fundamentalist networks, women's publishing houses, and advocacy for family law reform also became notable. As noted in Chapter 4, a series of books appeared on women and the law in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, published in French and Arabic by Editions le Fennec, a woman-owned publishing house based in Casablanca. The *Collectif 95 Maghreb-Egalité*, formed in 1993 by feminists in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, held meetings in each other's countries and cooperated on seminars, books, and media activities; a key publication in 2003 was its study of family law across the Maghreb, entitled *Dalil pour l'égalité dans la famille au Maghreb*, produced also in Arabic. Women's growing presence in both public spaces and the public sphere suggested cultural shifts; in some cases, those shifts came into conflict with the Islamist agenda as well as the neopatriarchal state.

Obstacles and risks remained. Economic participation and empowerment was limited to a small segment of the female population, educated, middle-class, and urbanized.⁹ Most MENA women remained outside the labor force, as the growing private sector did not offer work conditions similar to those in the public sector. The problem was exacerbated when governments sought to shrink the public-sector wage bill. In addition, in some countries, Islamization's spread influenced the nature of civil society and state policy on women and the family. Some governments colluded with the growing Islamist movements to introduce or strengthen Muslim family law, codifying women's subordination to male kin and thus their second-class citizenship. In other cases,

⁹ See Moghadam (1998b, 2005).

governments fought Islamist movements, especially when the latter threatened state authority. Even so, states retained a neopatriarchal approach to women and the family. The space for women's rights activism and effective advocacy thus depended on the nature of the state and its approach to the rising tide of Islamism, and the capacity of women's rights groups to forge alliances with like-minded groups within their countries and across borders.

The feminist organizations that emerged in the 1980s and grew in the 1990s were aware of the risks and challenges. Still, they pressed for family law reform. Where states had signed the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), women's groups called for removal of reservations. (Reservations enable a state-party to any given treaty to opt out of certain provisions.) In some cases, feminist advocacy did make a difference, and reforms were enacted.

What follows are country case studies of women's legal status and social positions before, during, and in the years after the Arab uprisings. We divide the chapter into three sets of cases: those with effective women's mobilizations that also benefited from a relatively supportive political environment (Tunisia and Morocco), those with weak women's mobilizations and little to no state support (Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Yemen), and the anomalous case of Egypt, with its long history of women's movement participation but low capacity for autonomous feminist mobilization or effective advocacy and influence, and little to no state support.

Strong Cases of Women's Mobilizations: Tunisia and Morocco

Tunisia

The history and evolution of the women's movement in Tunisia is closely tied to the nature of the Tunisian state and state-society dynamics since independence. Like other Arab countries, Tunisia's polity was authoritarian, but its version included a state-feminist orientation. With the promulgation of the 1956 *Code du Statut Personnel* (CSP), Tunisian women enjoyed the right to monogamous marriage, divorce, and child custody, which Arab women in many other countries still do not enjoy. However, inheritance continued to follow Sharia law: women inherited half of what their brothers did. Moreover, a 1973

directive issued by the justice ministry, during what Mounira Charrad has described as a socially conservative turn in the Bourguiba era, stipulated that a non-Muslim man who wished to marry a Tunisian woman had to convert to Islam and submit a certificate of his conversion as proof.¹⁰ Tunisia also saw episodes of political liberalization that enabled the emergence of political parties as well as a fairly robust civil society. The UGTT and the women's rights associations developed critiques of the status quo and occasionally challenged government. Tunisia ratified CEDAW in 1985, albeit with reservations.

Tunisian feminism arose in the 1970s in circumstances that were both local and global. The Club Taher Haddad was a feminist group named after the early Tunisian male reformist, and the group produced a magazine called *Nissa*.¹¹ Under Bourguiba's corporatist republican model, women's rights activities had been restricted to the UNFT, but after his removal and Ben Ali's assumption to the presidency, two feminist organizations that had earlier formed were given official recognition: *l'Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates* (ATFD) and *l'Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement* (AFTURD). In response to both the global diffusion of women's rights and domestic advocacy, the Tunisian state introduced a series of positive amendments to the CSP in 1993. The mother's consent was now required in addition to the father's for the marriage of a minor; a wife's duty of obedience to her husband was replaced by her right to be treated with care and concern; she gained the right to participate in the management of the family's affairs, such as the children's education, travel, and financial matters; and the couple could choose joint or separate financial holdings, to be stipulated in the marriage contract. CSP amendments also included the right of a child born out of wedlock to carry his/her father's name, receive the father's support until reaching adulthood, and inherit the same portion as a daughter. More legal advances occurred in the new century. In 2004, the ATFD secured passage of the country's first legislation combating sexual harassment, while the country's state-financed women's organization, the UNFT, established its own sexual harassment and domestic violence hotline. That same year, the CSP was amended

¹⁰ Charrad (1997). Perhaps counterintuitively, this was also a time when first-term abortion was legalized for married women with children.

¹¹ Brand (1998); Dwyer (1991); Tchaicha and Arfaoui (2017).

further to permit the mother to give her name to a child if the father was unknown or to claim a DNA test to prove paternity.¹²

On the political front, the Tunisian state introduced a voluntary party quota for women's representation in the national assembly. In 2004 women won 23 percent of seats and in 2009 their representation rose to 28 percent, mostly representing the ruling party, the Constitutional Rally for Democracy (RCD). Moreover, Tunisia was one of two MENA countries with a woman at the head of a political party. Maya Jribi, cofounder, and coleader, of the Progressive Democratic Party, had been an activist in the student movement and a cofounder of AFTURD. (Maya Jribi tragically died of cancer in 2018.)¹³ At this time, and uniquely for an Arab country, the Ben Ali regime presented itself as a champion of women's rights.¹⁴

Women's rights institutionalization, arguably unique to Tunisia, continued with the activities of the UNFT and the formation of two women's policy agencies. Women's professional associations – including women lawyers, magistrates, enterprise managers, and academics – often cooperated with the UNFT on specific projects. In 1990, the Ben Ali government established the *Centre de Recherches, d'Etudes, de Documentation, et de l'Information sur la Femme* (CREDIF), with the well-known legal scholar, Soukeina Bouraoui, as its first director. The agency was tasked with carrying out studies on various aspects of women's economic conditions and to submit them to the planning ministry. Tunisia also hosted the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), which received funding from international development agencies.¹⁵ Both CAWTAR and CREDIF continue to produce substantive studies on women's economic, political, and social conditions. Research on the plight of low-income divorced women led to the establishment in 1993 of a Fund for Divorced Women, which included "maintenance recovery" from the spouse.¹⁶

In 2006, Tunisia celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the CSP, an event commemorated with much ceremony by Tunisian feminists and allies in civil society. That same year, AFTURD published a book in two volumes arguing for equal inheritance.¹⁷ In June 2008, the

¹² Labidi (2007): 25–6, 33.

¹³ Another female party leader, Louisa Hanoune, led the Workers' Party in Algeria.

¹⁴ In 2002, the taxi driver carrying Moghadam and two other visitors wondered if they were in Tunis "*pour les droits des femmes*."

¹⁵ See, for example, Gribaa (2008–09). ¹⁶ UN CEDAW (2000).

¹⁷ AFTURD (2006).

Tunisian government ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (which enables individuals or groups to file claims of violations of rights specified in the Convention), but women's groups continued to press for full equality. The next year, the ATFD organized a Maghreb-wide seminar in Tunis on "Equality in inheritance" titled "Nothing Justifies Discrimination in Inheritance." Speakers included human rights lawyer Alya Chérif-Chammari and Sana Ben Achour, law professor and ATFD official. In 2009, partly in an effort to appeal to young women and men, the ATFD established the Ilhem Marzouki Feminist University. In 2010, the ATFD submitted a shadow report to the CEDAW Committee's forty-seventh session, calling for Tunisia's withdrawal of the reservations the state entered, when it signed and ratified the Convention.¹⁸ One issue that preoccupied the women's rights groups was violence against women (VAW). The ATFD had started working on the issue as early as 1991, and a commission was formed to identify strategies to tackle the problem of domestic violence. An international seminar convened in Tunis in November 1993 and published a report, *Les Violences à l'égard des femmes*. That same year, the ATFD appointed a person to counsel women victims of domestic violence and then created a "listening center" (*centre d'écoute*) where women could share their concerns and receive legal advice. The passage in 1998 of a law criminalizing "honor crimes" and an amended Article 218 of the Penal Code introduced punishments for perpetrators of family violence, making the punishment for domestic violence double that of an ordinary offense. Feminists complained that enforcement was weak and continued to advocate for both tougher penalties and more formalized care for women victims.¹⁹

Tunisian feminism has been characterized by a strong secularist and human rights orientation that is also open to collaboration with other civil society organizations (CSOs), notably the UGTT and the human rights league. Its insistence on remaining autonomous during the Ben Ali era helped it acquire a reputation for integrity and credibility. Its important contribution to both civil society and the diffusion of the women's rights frame prepared it for the challenges ahead, when the Ben Ali regime fell and the Ennahda Party entered the political process. Proponents of an Islamist Tunisia had to contend with a vigilant and well-organized feminist movement, which participated in the

¹⁸ ATFD (2010). ¹⁹ Arfaoui and Moghadam (2016). See also Labidi (2008).

agenda-setting process during the transitional period and heated deliberations within the National Constituent Assembly (known by its French acronym ANC), charged with drafting a new constitution.

On the eve of the Arab Spring protests, Tunisian women were present in an array of occupations and professions as well as in parliament, and a strong presence in civil society. In the years prior to the 2011 revolution, feminists had advocated for women's equality in all areas, including inheritance and full implementation of CEDAW; the lifting of the 1973 ban on women marrying non-Muslim men; and ending VAW. Those priorities continued after the uprising, along with new ones such as women's parity in political representation. The years 2011–13 saw considerable contention between Islamists on the one hand and secularists, leftists, and feminists on the other. There is some merit to the argument that Tunisia's "state-sponsored feminism" under the Ben Ali regime was superficial and that the quota system primarily benefited the state and ruling party.²⁰ Nevertheless, change had occurred in gender relations, as witnessed by women's growing involvement in the professions, and by their capacity for mobilizations against any regression. Moreover, the electoral quota became part of the feminist agenda in 2011.

Tunisian women, therefore, were present in the four High Commissions established to run the country during the transitional period. Elections for the ANC saw a plurality of votes cast for Ennahda, which then formed a coalition government. The feminist groups remained mobilized, and AFTURD and ATFD organized marches in 2011 and 2012 for "liberty, dignity, equality." As early as August 2011, the Tunisian Council of Ministers adopted a draft decree to lift the CEDAW reservations. The removal of reservations recognized women's equal partnership in marriage and in making decisions about their children, demonstrating that "[t]he Tunisian government, . . . , is proclaiming its commitment to advance women's rights."²¹ Tunisian women now were able to pass on their nationality to their children, with equal rights and responsibilities in marriage and divorce and in matters relating to

²⁰ See, for example, Goulding (2009).

²¹ Human Rights Watch, "Tunisia: Government Lifts Restrictions on Women's Rights Treaty," September 7, 2011. The August 16 decree lifted all reservations except a general declaration that Tunisia "shall not take any organizational or legislative decision in conformity with the requirements of this Convention where such a decision would conflict with the provisions of Chapter I of the Tunisian Constitution." See also Khalil (2014b).

children and guardianship, the family name and occupation, and ownership of property. The first country in the region to lift CEDAW reservations, Tunisia then joined Morocco as the only two MENA countries to adopt the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, entitling individuals or groups of individuals to submit complaints on women's rights violations to the CEDAW Committee.²²

The battle was not yet won, however, as debates in the ANC began to revolve around constitutional language pertaining to women's *equality* versus the *complementarity* of women and men. As one ANC member said, "We spent too much time on cultural and religious questions when we should have been discussing social and economic problems."²³ Eventually feminists and their allies within the ANC won the intense debate, and the reference to the equality of women and men was retained. When Ommezine Khelifa, a rising star in the Ettakatol Party, declared in an essay that "women's empowerment is deeply ingrained in our culture," few considered this an exaggeration.²⁴ Focus group interviews conducted across the country in February 2012 for the National Democratic Institute found that "Many women expressed a strong sense of support and relief knowing that women's organizations exist in Tunisia to help other women."²⁵ Respondents could not name many political figures but they could name Maya Jribi, Bochra Bel Haj Hmida (ATFD member and feminist lawyer who later ran under Nidaa Tounes ticket and won a parliamentary seat), Radhia Nasraoui (a human rights lawyer married to Hama Hammami, the head of the left-wing Front Populaire), and Salma Baccar (filmmaker and constituent assembly member representing the left-wing Democratic Modernist Pole); they could also name former first lady Leila Trabelsi and the Ennahda parliamentary member Mehrzieh Laabidi.²⁶ Such knowledge on the part of ordinary Tunisian women is indicative of the influence of prominent Tunisian women and the diffusion of the women's rights agenda.

²² www.trustlaw/news/tunisia-government-lifts-restrictions-on-womens-rights-treaty

²³ Mabrouka M'barek, member of Constituent Assembly representing *Congrès de la République*, in comments to Moghadam, Stanford University Conference, Tunis, March 28, 2013. For details on the "complementarity" debate, see Charrad and Zarrugh (2014).

²⁴ Khelifa (2012). ²⁵ Borovsky and Ben Yahia (2012). ²⁶ Ibid.: 6.

The 2014 constitution gave Tunisian citizens an array of personal freedoms and social and political rights, with Article 46 stipulating that the state is responsible for actions to end VAW. Article 21 states that “All citizens, male and female, have equal rights and duties, and are equal before the law without any discrimination.” After the presidential election of November 2014 and as the new government ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights and the Rights of Women in Africa, President Beji Caid Essebsi paid tribute to Tunisian women, saying he was “grateful to the Tunisian women for having supported his candidacy in the presidential election by over one million votes.”²⁷ The expansive constitutional language encouraged Tunisian feminists to push for laws and policies previously denied them, and President Essebsi was supportive of the equal citizenship claims of the feminist organizations. In March 2017, an alliance of sixty Tunisian CSOs called on authorities to scrap the 1973 decree and enable a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim man if she wished. Sana Ben Achour, president of the Beity association, told a news conference that “it is inadmissible today for a simple decree, which has almost no judicial value . . . to command the lives of thousands.”²⁸

Another campaign pertained to VAW. Tunisia’s family planning office had found that some 47 percent of women aged eighteen to sixty-four had experienced violence of some kind, but typically domestic. The rape in September 2012 of Meriem Ben Mohamed by two policemen – whose defense was that she had been behaving immodestly with her boyfriend – galvanized Tunisia’s feminist population. In September 2014, ATFD organized a national workshop and launched an Action Plan 2015–17 on VAW. In attendance were ATFD representatives from branches in Tunis, Ben Arous, Bizerte, Sfax, Sousse, and Kairouan, who reported on their work. In March 2016, “*Espace Tamkin*” opened as a women’s shelter (*centre d’hébergement*) for thirty persons (women and children) and by 2017, had provided services to eighty-eight women and children. It offers shelter for three

²⁷ *Tunis-Afrique Presse*, January 31, 2015.

²⁸ See Agence-France Presse (2017). In March 2015, Moghadam was informed by one Tunisian interviewee, married to a Frenchman, of her marital dilemma: she wished to remain in Tunisia and help build democracy, but her marriage could not be legally recognized so long as her husband did not convert to Islam, which he refused to do.

months and a work training program.²⁹ Finally, in late July 2017, the Tunisian parliament adopted a new law to prosecute all forms of rape and private or public forms of conjugal violence (inclusive of fiancées, former fiancées, and former wives); prosecution of a perpetrator even if the victim withdraws the complaint; raising the age of consent to sixteen (from the previous thirteen); establishment of a special police unit to handle VAW cases.³⁰

Feminists continued their advocacy for equal inheritance rights. In an address delivered in August 2017 during celebrations for Tunisian National Women's Day, President Essebsi announced the formation of the Committee on Individual Freedoms and Rights (COLIBE in the French acronym), to be headed by Bochra Belhaj Hmida, the attorney, human rights and women's rights activist, and MP. The nine-member committee included lawyers, university professors, and two other women's rights activists. Its main task was to prepare a report on reforms related to individual freedoms and gender equality in accordance with the 2014 constitution, including the issue of equal inheritance. The committee's recommendations would be delivered to Essebsi before being submitted to the parliament for a vote. Ennahda was opposed to a bill for equal inheritance, and there was not a great deal of popular support for it. After Essebsi's death, the bill was put on hold.³¹

Tunisian women were always in advance of their Arab sisters in legal rights and social positions, and those advantages helped the feminist organizations mobilize support for the defense and expansion of women's rights in the years following the political revolution. There is, however, unfinished business for women, as well as for men, in democratic Tunisia. High unemployment, the rural-urban divide, and low employment levels of women with less than tertiary education are but some of the problems that haunt the democratic transition.³²

²⁹ This was a joint effort of the National Office of Family and Population and the Spanish international development agency. See Mahfoudh-Draoui et al. (2016): 13.

³⁰ Moghadam thanks Samia Bouslama Letaief (AFTURD and UGTT), who distributed the announcement signed by ATFD, AFTURD, Beity, and *Ligue des électrices tunisiennes* (LET), on August 1, 2017. In an interview in Tunis on June 19, 2017, law professor Hafidha Chékir, lawyer Hadidha Hayat, and religious studies professor Amel Grami gave credit to one Ennahda woman MP, Yamina Zoghalmi, who supported the VAW law.

³¹ Al-Hilali (2018).

³² For details on Tunisian women's employment problems and prospects, see Moghadam (2019).

Morocco

French colonial rule imposed its own legal system but left personal laws under the jurisdiction of religion or tradition. The Moroccan *moudawana*, or family code, drafted in 1957, was based principally on the Maliki School of Islamic jurisprudence, reflecting a kind of accommodation between the newly independent state and kin-based formations. As Charrad has described it, Morocco's kin-based patriarchy privileged men as members of the patrilineage, and women were subordinated to male kin in the postcolonial arrangement; among the distinctive Moroccan features of MENA neopatriarchy was the power accorded to the *wilaya*, or the male guardian, in addition to men's rights to polygamy and repudiation.³³ For over twenty years, the *moudawana* was viewed as immutable. This began to change in the early 1990s, when King Hassan II ended his repressive "years of lead," releasing political prisoners and enacting reform, including amendments to the family code. In 1993, women ran in the general elections for the first time and two women won seats in parliament.

The women's rights groups that had emerged from the left-wing movements became more organized and helped form the *Collectif* in 1993. Western democracy-promotion efforts enabled Moroccans to forge new associations and organizations and indeed to develop what became a vibrant civil society. Academics, activists, and publishers joined feminist sociologist Fatema Mernissi's "anti-fundamentalist network," meeting in Helsinki, Paris, and Casablanca. Preparations for the Beijing conference had led to a flurry of research projects on an array of women's issues, while leaders of feminist CSOs joined forces with their Algerian and Tunisian counterparts to prepare an alternative egalitarian family code for the Maghreb. Morocco's *Union d'action féminine* (UAF) and *Association démocratique des femmes du Maroc* (ADFM) advocated for removal of reservations to CEDAW. Other prominent women's rights groups and coalitions were *Fédération de la Ligue démocratique des droits des femmes* (FLDDF), *Jossour forum des femmes marocaines*, and *Coalition printemps féministe pour la démocratie et l'égalité*. Especially fruitful in Morocco were the ties between CSOs and political parties. Well-known women's rights advocates included those associated with the *Collectif* and advocacy for

³³ Charrad (2001).

family law reform, such as Latifa Jbabdi, Rabéa Naciri, Amina Lemrini, and Farida Benani, and women associated with political parties, notably Aicha Belarbi and Nouzha Skalli. In 2001, women politicians from Morocco's main parties – *Istiqlal*, *Union Socialists des Forces Populaires*, the leftist *Parti du Progrès et du Socialisme* (PPS), and the *Mouvement Populaires*, among others – established a network of women working for the establishment of a women's quota system. The quota was established in 2002, and the women politicians played an important role in pushing for family law reform and reform of the nationality law.³⁴

During this period, a central campaign was a petition drive for a million signatures for women's rights, which helped usher in the 1993 amendments to the family code. The amendments limited the (male) guardian's control and emphasized that a woman should give her consent to be married and should sign the marriage contract. They also allowed fatherless women over the age of twenty-one to contract their marriage without a guardian, and stipulated that before taking a second wife, a husband would have to inform his first wife. The mother was given the right to legally represent her children after their father's death, although she still could not dispose of the children's inherited property. However, the *moudawana* continued to treat women as subordinate, and so the campaign to reform it continued. A unique set of events brought about its revision.

In 1998, King Hassan II appointed Abderrahmane Youssoufi as prime minister, whose progressive cabinet included economist and PPS member Mohamed Said Saadi as Minister of Women and Family Affairs. Saadi supported the National Plan of Action (NPA) for the Integration of Women in Development, which included a call for the reform of the *moudawana* in the interests of human rights and national development. A backlash occurred against what was labeled an anti-Muslim, Western-influenced, World Bank-led demand for reform. Religious groups joined to challenge what they perceived as an attack on the Muslim family and Moroccan society. While not all women supported reform and not all Muslims opposed family law reform, a divide was created between intellectuals and women's associations seeking reform on one side, and on the other, Islamist associations labeling the reform as a threat to Islam and the family. Sustained

³⁴ Sadiqi (2016); Sater (2007).

hostility from religious fundamentalist groups resulted in putting the Plan on hold, but the women's organizations and their allies in government pressed ahead. The Youssoufi government did not retain power in 2002, but thirty-five women entered the Moroccan parliament, assisted by the new quota system adopted by the political parties. King Mohammad VI, far more liberal than his late father, appointed a royal commission to advise him on family law and legitimate change by way of the Qur'an. Women's rights organizations organized workshops and discussion groups to analyze the draft legislation, educate the public, and lobby parliament for what they argued would be reforms to promote the wellbeing of women, children, and the family. The new, more women-friendly law became possible in the wake of a terrorist attack in Casablanca on May 16, 2003, when King Mohammed VI, as Commander of the Faithful, decided that reform was necessary, and the Islamist groups that had opposed changes ceased their public displays of opposition. In October 2003, the King announced the new family code, which he asserted was consistent with the spirit of Sharia. In an expression of incipient democracy, the bill was sent to parliament.

Adopted in January 2004, Morocco's new family code established a uniform minimum legal age for marriage at eighteen; the principle of sex equality, joint guardianship and equal responsibility in the home; consensual divorce in place of repudiation; child protection and recognition of child paternity whether in or out of wedlock; and a central role for judges and family courts in the resolution of family affairs. Morocco now joined Tunisia (and Turkey) as the only MENA countries where the spouses shared responsibility for the family. The reform was rightly heralded as a giant leap in the rights of women and girls and is a striking example of how women's rights advocates can address a taboo subject by building coalitions to generate social dialogue and launch key policy debates. Arguments about protecting women and children and involving women in all aspects of public life to advance socioeconomic development, proved resonant.³⁵

In line with the NPA, Morocco had adopted the quota system in 2002 to guarantee a minimum level of representation for women in the

³⁵ Moghadam and Gheytaichi (2010); Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam (2006); Sadiqi and Ennaji (2006); Salime (2011); Skalli (2007).

legislature and then implemented proportional representation through a closed party-list system, helping thirty-five women secure 11 percent of parliamentary seats that year. The October 2007 cabinet included seven women – Morocco's highest female representation since independence. On the eve of the Arab Spring protests, therefore, Moroccan women enjoyed enhanced legal rights, a strong presence in civil society and political society, and the state's recognition of women's rights organizations.

In 2011, constitutional reforms included a new regulatory law that increased, through a legislative mechanism, the number of parliamentary seats allocated to women from thirty to sixty. This enabled a total of sixty-seven women to win seats, accounting for a 17 percent female share. Parliament also ratified a law pertaining to the local elected councils, raising women's representation in local councils (municipalities and rural councils) from 12 percent to 27 percent. In the 2016 legislative elections, women won 81 of 395 seats, or 20.5 percent: 60 seats through the national women's list, 9 through regular (non-quota) lists and 12 through the youth list.³⁶ Other initiatives ensued. CEDAW reservations were removed; measures were taken to harmonize domestic laws with each other and with the international women's rights agenda; women's rights groups continued their advocacy for greater reproductive rights and an end to VAW.³⁷ And for the first time, a woman, Nabila Mounib – an outspoken feminist and left-wing activist, who had been involved in the M20F – was elected in 2012 to head the United Socialist Party. In Fall 2016, some thirteen Moroccan women were sworn in as ambassadors, one as Morocco's first woman ambassador to the USA.

The more open political environment enabled increased international collaborations. A Moroccan delegation of Human Rights Council members from Azghenghan traveled to Roquetas de Mar, Spain to learn about women and family training projects that could be implemented in Morocco. Segangan City Councillor and President

³⁶ Darhour and Dahlerup (2013). See also www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?ul=en&country=138. Sater (2012) argues that though female MPs share educational and professional features, rigid party loyalties have prevented cross-party collaboration.

³⁷ www.cndh.ma/sites/default/files/cndh_-_r.e_-_web_parite_egalite_uk_-.pdf "Gender Equality and Parity in Morocco" – publication of the CNDH; and https://cndh.ma/sites/default/files/cndh_-_memo_uk_violence_contre_les_femmes_-.pdf. "Fighting Violence against Women," Contribution to public debate, CNDH, 2015.

of the Noumidia Association for Family and Children, Bouchra El Khalfioui, and the President of Morocco's National Federation of Amazigh Associations, Mohamed El Hammouchi, sought to learn about Roquetas de Mar's longstanding programs like the "Municipal Information Center for Women," which was established in 1995 to offer women information, training, and psychological care, as well as intervention in civil, criminal, and labor law cases. The plan was for training and exchanges of experience and expertise with a view to implementing productive projects for women and their families."³⁸ In another international collaboration, the World Bank expanded its EmpowerHer Hackathon, intended to address restrictions on women's labor force participation, to Morocco. The March 2018 event in Casablanca attracted young developers, rural women's associations, and private sector sponsors to discuss innovative solutions and share suggestions. The initiative had the support of Fatema Marouane, Minister of Handicrafts, Social Economy, and Solidarity; the ministry implemented a set of training programs and financial education workshops for women workers in the artisanal field, in the hope that such programs might help alleviate household poverty, women's economic exclusion, and the high rates of unemployment.³⁹

The evolution of the women's movement in Morocco, like that of Tunisia, has occurred in tandem with other advances in civil society, greater representation of women in the professions and the political process, a trend toward democratization, and sociodemographic changes. Together, these have constituted a shift in the "gender regime" from neopatriarchal to a new model that tentatively may be called "conservative-corporatist."⁴⁰ In both countries, however, concerted efforts are needed for the attainment of women's economic citizenship. High unemployment and deteriorating public services continue to plague lower-income groups in urban and rural settings alike. Compared with Tunisia, Moroccan women comprise a heterogeneous population with more pressing basic needs, but in both countries, the neoliberal policy environment seems to preclude a more socially

³⁸ Cabrera (2017).

³⁹ *Morocco World News*, "World Bank Organization Launches Morocco's 'EmpowerHer' Hackathon" (March 20, 2017), <https://bit.ly/3nrkNvr>

⁴⁰ See Moghadam (2020). The conservative-corporatist model is akin to that found in Japan, South Korea, and Germany. On the concept of the gender regime more specifically, see Walby (2004).

inclusive economic model that would grant *all* women and girls high-quality public education and healthcare, more employment opportunities with decent work conditions, and policies to encourage maternal employment. Many of the teachers protesting fixed-term work contracts and medical students protesting privatization of healthcare, mentioned in Chapter 4, have been women.

Egypt: An Anomalous Case

Egypt exemplifies a modernizing nationalism that provided limited support for women's participation and rights. It is also a paradoxical case of a country with a history of what Mervat Hatem called "state feminism" under Gamal Abd-el Nasser and an even longer history of women's participation in protests, with courageous leaders such as Huda Sharawi, Doria Shafik, and the socialists Nawal Saadawi, Arwa Salih, and Sana al-Misri. But repression and regressions rendered Egypt far behind Tunisia in the new century, and behind Morocco in women's rights within the family as well as women's political representation. Female genital mutilation (FGM) has been widely practiced in Egypt and shocking incidents of sexual abuse of women protesters occurred in 2011 and afterwards.

Egyptian women participated in large numbers in the uprising against British colonialism in 1919, only to be excluded from the political landscape. Yet, their activism continued. In 1923, the Egyptian feminist Huda Shaarawi stood in a Cairo train station and removed her veil. As Salma Botman's study showed, women members of the communist movement in the 1930s–50s broke social taboos by mingling with men through their participation in political party work, wherein they protested the British but also advocated for women's participation and rights.⁴¹ They also initiated transnational connections; several Egyptian communist women attended the first World Congress of Women, organized by the *Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes* and held in Paris in November of 1945 (the Federation soon moved its headquarters to the German Democratic Republic.) Egyptian women earned the vote in 1956, and in 1957, Egypt became the first Arab country to elect a woman to parliament.⁴²

⁴¹ On the role of Egyptian left-wing women, including communists, see Botman (1988), and <https://marx.libcom.org/library/womens-participation-radical-egyptian-politics-1939-1952-selma-botman>. See also Hammad (2011, 2016).

⁴² Botman (1988): 118.

For its time, the Nasser period was favorable to women, especially through access to schooling and jobs in the expanding state sector. The state's extensive modernization program – land redistribution, industrialization, rural development, expansion of free education and healthcare, and social benefits such as minimum wage, reduced working hours, and access to cheap credit and subsidized goods and services – enabled upward social mobility for many Egyptians, including women.⁴³ Social benefits, however, began to fray under President Sadat and more rapidly under President Mubarak.

Women's rights activism, inspired and to some extent protected by the UN Decade for Women, continued in largely muted form. Farida El-Naqqash of the Arab Socialist Union founded the Progressive Women's Union, which was affiliated with the leftist Tagammu party, after she was released from prison in 1981. Other women's rights groups that emerged in the 1980s included AWSA, formed in 1982 by Nawal Saadawi; the New Woman Study Group, formed in 1984 by former student activists (e.g., Hala Shukrallah, formerly with Tagammu); the Alliance for Arab Women, founded in 1987 by a group of professional women; the Association for Development of Egyptian Women (ADEW), founded in 1987 by a younger generation, including sociologist Iman Bibars. The year 1995 saw the formation of the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, led by Azza Soliman, followed by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, directed by Nehad Abu al-Komsan. The growing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, however, emboldened affiliated lawyers to initiate a legal case in 2001 against feminist author and gynecologist Nawal Saadawi for her alleged apostasy; their suit sought a mandatory divorce between Saadawi and her husband. Saadawi and her husband left Egypt to spend time at a US university before the case was dismissed.⁴⁴

Egypt had seen regression in women's rights since the 1985 decision to strengthen Muslim family law. The shift to political liberalization may have created space for the expansion of all manner of CSOs and NGOs, but economic liberalization closed off possibilities for women's economic empowerment, leading to new categories of working poor, expanding the informal sector, and contracting job opportunities in the

⁴³ Bayat (2006).

⁴⁴ BBC: "Egyptian writer faces apostasy trial," http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1295075.stm

public sector for university-educated women and those with high school diplomas.⁴⁵ As the Mubarak regime showed no commitment to women's participation and rights, legal gains were limited. In 2000, and with the support of first lady Suzanne Mubarak, women won the right to a *khul'a* divorce, an Islamic practice that enables a woman to divorce herself but also obliges her to return or renounce her *mahr*, the financial gift (or dowry) from her husband. Even this limited right was opposed by Islamists. Mubarak then appointed the first woman judge. In 2008, FGM was finally banned, the trigger being the death of an eleven-year-old girl who was cut at a private clinic. That Egypt was a very conservative society, was confirmed by many studies; a 2008 survey found a majority of Egyptians agreeing that an unwed girl who became pregnant could be killed.⁴⁶ Sexual harassment was rampant, and highly publicized incidents in 2005, 2006, and 2008 underscored the gravity of the problem. The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights found that 46 percent of Egyptian women and 52.3 percent of foreign women were subjected to sexual harassment on a daily basis, including men staring inappropriately at their bodies, inappropriate touching, sexually explicit comments, and stalking.⁴⁷

The contention over Tahany el-Gibali's appointment to the Constitutional Court emanated from conservative judges campaigning to stop what they regarded as an exception from becoming a trend. When Egypt's Supreme Judicial Council, which has jurisdiction over criminal and civil courts, selected thirty-one women as judges in 2007, that decision too angered conservatives who said women were not suited for the role. (The women were later appointed by presidential decree.) In early February 2010, judges voted to bar women from ruling in an influential court advising the government. According to one account, 380 judges took part in a general assembly and voted, with 334 rejecting the appointment of women to judicial posts and only 42 agreeing, with 4 abstentions.⁴⁸ A top court ruled later that year that women should be allowed to serve on the State Council. Women's role in the political process was similarly contested, with few occupying ministerial and parliamentary seats. A 2009 amendment had created a 64-seat quota for women in the 444-seat Lower House, and fully 63 of those

⁴⁵ See Moghadam (1998b), ch. 5. ⁴⁶ Brysk (2018): 146.

⁴⁷ Tadros (2010): 100; see also El Feki et al. (2017).

⁴⁸ AFP, "Egypt: Women Judges Barred from Influential Court," www.wluml.org/node/5984

seats went to women from the ruling New Democratic Party. In early 2011, women made up 12 percent of Egypt's Lower House and 7 percent of the Upper House, according to data from the Interparliamentary Union.

Grievances and Organizing in the New Century

As described in Chapter 4, anger over the 2003 US invasion and occupation of Iraq, the rigged 2005 elections, and increases in the cost of food and fuel led to collective action and mobilizations against the unpopular Mubarak regime. Activists formed networks, conferences, blogs, and worker support groups. At the same time, the new century saw the formation of more women's rights organizations. In 2008, Mozn Hassan formed *Nazra for Feminist Studies*. The *Women and Memory Forum* was founded by Hoda Elsaada, and in 2008, the *New Woman Foundation* initiated a project to support the socioeconomic struggles of working-class women in their workplaces. Many of the women's NGOs worked apart from, or often at odds with, Suzanne Mubarak's National Council for Women. Still, "feminism" and "patriarchy" were not prominent terms in the discourses of the women's associations; indeed, Nicola Pratt mentions how women participants in the 2002–08 Cairo conferences rejected the term "feminism" as Western and alien to Egyptian culture and preferred to focus on themes associated with the nation, religion, culture, and resistance to imperialism and Zionism.⁴⁹ Such a stance arguably made women activists less prepared for the post-Arab Spring backlash.

It was a courageous young woman with the April 6 Youth Movement who summoned protesters to the streets. On January 18, 2011, Asma Mahfouz invited fellow Egyptians to join her for a Day of Rage on January 25. Facing down the camera, she told her audience "Do not be afraid." Her call to arms brought millions of women and men out on the streets, marching and rallying until the dictator fell. The mass demonstrations that ousted President Hosni Mubarak from his thirty-year rule were led by both men and women. The world saw the women of Tahrir Square, marching, yelling, dancing, singing, smoking, waving signs, and taking hits alongside their fellow citizens. The euphoria, however, was short-lived.⁵⁰ Unlike Morocco and especially Tunisia, women's activism in the 2011 protests in Egypt was not inspired by feminist goals. Interviews by political scientist Nermin

⁴⁹ Pratt (2012). ⁵⁰ Zayed (2011).

Allam reveal the importance some women activists in Egypt placed on a decidedly “non-feminist” activism, situating their inspiration in nationalism or social betterment, not feminism. One of Allam’s interviewees declared that she was not a feminist and that she found the term alienating and limiting to her activism. Of the 118 activists Allam interviewed, 84 reported that feminist ideologies, and self-defined feminists, carried a negative image among Egyptians.⁵¹

Because Egyptian women’s gains had been recent and fragile, they became the victim of a patriarchal backlash after the first democratic elections in fall 2011. It took two forms: abuse in Tahrir Square by marauding men, police, and the military, and limited political representation and recognition. The post-Arab Spring gendered outcome in Egypt can be divided into two periods: 2011–13, characterized by the dominance of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in the constituent assembly and the election of the MB-affiliated Mohamed Morsi to the presidency; and 2013 to the present, which began with a second popular uprising, this time against Morsi and the MB, coupled with a military coup in July 2013, followed by years of repression and some concessions.

For the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the “revolution” was over after January 25, 2011, and on March 9, it broke up a peaceful sit-in in Tahrir Square, allowing thugs to beat protesters and arresting many, including eighteen women, detaining them initially at the Egyptian Museum. Of the eighteen women arrested, seventeen were taken to a women’s prison, where they were hit, insulted, and subjected to highly invasive and humiliating “virginity tests.”⁵² At the time, General al-Sisi, later Egypt’s president, said of the young women that they were “not respectable.” This was uttered despite the fact that the late protester Sally Zahran was perhaps the most famous woman martyr of the 18-day uprising. A proposal for a Saudi Arabia-style morality police force came from the Islamist group Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya, newly “liberated” by the democratic transition.⁵³

⁵¹ Allam (2018). ⁵² Amnesty International (2013); Zaki (2015).

⁵³ Allam (2018); Sussman (2011). The matter was discussed at a panel discussion on sexual violence in Tahrir Square and the new campaigns to highlight the problem, at the Conference on Gender Rights and Constitutional Reform in the Arab Region, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon, June 24, 2014 (Moghadam notes). See also Brysk (2018): 174; Nazra for Feminist Studies statement, <https://nazra.org/en/2014/07/first-verdict-cases-mob-sexual-assault-and-gang-rape-tahrir-square-no-end-story>

The absence of women on a committee charged with amending Egypt's constitution for elections post-Mubarak was an early sign casting doubt on the country's capacity for an inclusive democracy. In a statement distributed by Nahed Shehata of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, an opposition group of over sixty NGOs and activists raised questions "about the future of participation, and whether this revolution sought to liberate all of society or just some of its sectors." It added: "We affirm that Egyptian women participated in the revolution, and proof of such is that many remain missing or arrested. They have every right to participate in building the Egyptian nation."⁵⁴ Women protesters, however, were quickly cast aside as the army stepped in under SCAF and consolidated its hold on power. Women whose voices had inspired and sustained the political revolution found themselves excluded from the new political reality. A "Council of Wise Men" went to negotiate with SCAF on transitional measures, and on February 15, 2011, the army convened an all-male Constitutional Committee, which came up with troubling amendments to the constitution. Article 75, which protesters did not want amended, was nonetheless rewritten to bar a presidential candidate married to a non-Egyptian woman.⁵⁵ In the 2011 elections, Egyptians voted overwhelmingly for the MB and Salafist Nour candidates, who came to dominate Egypt's 498-person parliament. Of the nine women MPs (a 2 percent female share), one was from the Nour party and wanted to undo the *khul'a* law.⁵⁶ Nehad Lotfy Abu el Komsaan, director of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, said she had seen the backlash coming. During the protests, she explained, she tried to engage other women in discussion about the future of their rights in a post-Mubarak Egypt, but the women protesters preferred to remain focused on Mubarak's removal. Protesters were jubilant about the "Tahrir revolution" and the positive atmosphere. One of many worrying signs presented itself when SCAF chose Tarik al-Bishry – a leader of the opposition to the appointment of Egypt's first female judge in 2003 – as the head of constitutional reform panel.⁵⁷

The MB reneged on its promise not put forward a presidential candidate, and nominated Mohamed Morsi. The Morsi regime began undoing the (few) rights that women had earned before the January

⁵⁴ Zayed (2011). ⁵⁵ Sussman (2011). ⁵⁶ Khattab (2012).

⁵⁷ Sussman (2011).

uprising, including the *khul'a* law, the right of a mother to custody of her children until the age of fifteen, the law criminalizing FGM, and the minimum age of marriage of eighteen. During the annual meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the UN Secretariat in New York in March 2013, the MB-dominated government rejected the UN Declaration to Eliminate Violence against Women; the government's representative argued that the declaration contradicted Muslim values and the Egyptian family. The government's choice of thirty-one ministers included just one woman, down from three under Mubarak. One right was won, however. Reflecting its pro-Palestinian stance, the Morsi government in early May 2011 issued a decree allowing Egyptian women married to Palestinian men, the right to pass their nationality to their children. The Women and Constitution Study Group formed and began lobbying Islamist women in the constitutional assembly for an equality clause, although the Islamist women said they would not support it.⁵⁸

The short-lived Morsi era was turbulent, with the government becoming very unpopular because of its authoritarian tendencies as well as its inability to address socioeconomic concerns. Citizens began to demonstrate against Morsi's power grab and the MB's view that "Egypt is Islamic." Sexual assaults on women had become rampant, with estimates of more than 250 cases between November 2012 and January 2013. During protests leading up to and after the 2013 anti-Morsi protests, at least ninety-one women were victims of sex assaults. Women were repeatedly beaten, stripped, molested, and penetrated by fingers and even sharp objects. Samira Ibrahim, one of the survivors of the notorious virginity tests of March 2011, subsequently became a leading spokesperson against them. Nermin Allam describes how researchers at Nazra, El Nadeem Centre for Rehabilitation of victims of Violence, and the New Women Organization compiled the testimonies of twenty-eight survivors of collective sexual assault, which included violent rapes.⁵⁹

As the most horrific acts of violence – against protesters, women, and Egypt's Coptic Christians – occurred during Morsi's presidency, he and the MB were seen to be responsible. Mariz Tadros cites evidence that MB members were responsible for sexual violence during protests

⁵⁸ Moghadam notes of talk by Hoda Elsaada, Lebanese American University, Beirut, June 24, 2014.

⁵⁹ Allam (2018): 111; see also Zaki (2015).

outside the Ittihadiya Palace in December 2012, and for attacks on Christians.⁶⁰ With the emergence of the Tamarod protests against the Morsi- and MB-led government, the military intervened in July 2013 to force the MB out of the political scene, in what some saw as a second revolution and others, a military coup. General al-Sisi left his military career to run for the presidency.

2013 and Afterwards: Women's Mobilizations, Gains, and Setbacks

Perhaps because of the international outcry over the sexual assaults and the unflattering comparison to the more positive developments in Tunisia, al-Sisi appointed five women, including feminist academic Hoda Elsaada, to the 2013 constitutional assembly. In January 2014, the new constitution included Article 11 explicitly committing the state to ensuring gender equality, women's parliamentary representation, women's participation in state institutions, and state protection from violence. However, the government refrained from instituting a gender quota in Egypt, in contrast to neighboring Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Endorsement of the 2014 constitution was at 98 percent, but turnout was just 40 percent – although that rate was higher than turnout for the 2012 constitution. Some developments in political society and civil society appeared promising. In early 2014, the Dastour Party became the first Egyptian political party to elect a woman, Hala Shukrallah, as its president, although she stepped down in 2015. The emergence of new feminist initiatives aimed at drawing more attention to VAW and to combating included the formation of HarassMap and the anti-DV campaign led by KAFA, both of which challenged social taboos, along with the establishment of anti-sexual harassment units at Cairo and Ain Shams universities.⁶¹ The National Council for Women – previously reviled as a plaything of Mrs. Mubarak – was revived after 2014, launching a national strategy to combat VAW. In 2015, and in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2017–20 was adopted, involving twelve governmental organizations, several NGOs, and both Christian and Muslim religious institutions.

Some activists, however, were less impressed with either the new constitution or the new government, seeing them as instruments of repression, with any and all dissent banned, and dissenters punished

⁶⁰ Tadros (2013). ⁶¹ Shalaby (2016).

and even killed.⁶² Political scientist Hind Ahmed Zaki's keen 2015 analysis of the problematical nature of the al-Sisi government's "state feminism," and her critique of the 2013 military intervention, anticipated the hard realities ahead. There were more sexual assaults during al-Sisi's inauguration. Shaima al-Sabbagh, a member of the Socialist Popular Alliance Party, was killed by a sniper during a march on January 24, 2015 to commemorate the victims of the 2011 uprising. In December 2016, Azza Soliman, women's right activist and founder of the Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA), was arrested. The authorities also arrested Mozn Hassan, founder and director of Nazra for Feminism Studies, freezing her assets and barring her from travel. She did, however, receive international recognition and, in 2017, she was awarded the Right Livelihood Award – dubbed the alternative Nobel Prize – for her lobbying and advocacy work on women's rights. As she could not travel to Stockholm to receive the award, the foundation held the ceremony in Cairo. During her speech, Hassan said that Egypt's independent civil society was under threat but that she had faith that the new generation would pursue freedom.⁶³

Ironically, President al-Sisi declared 2017 the "Year of Egyptian Women" and appointed the first woman governor. The next year saw the appointment of more women to the cabinet, for a total of eight women, or 25 percent of ministerial seats, the largest figures ever; the women ministers were found in the ministries of health, culture, environment, tourism, social solidarity, immigration, planning, and investment and international cooperation.⁶⁴ In June 2018, the number of women

⁶² Salma El-Naqqash, member of both the Socialist Popular Alliance and Nazra for Feminist Studies, and Mervat Tellaway, head of the National Council for Women, saw the constitution as uneven and contradictory, especially with respect to the role and power of the judiciary and military in the state apparatus. See <https://bit.ly/2INyUN4>

⁶³ Feminists, human rights defenders and politicians were present at the ceremony including member of the EU and Swedish parliaments, who condemned the sanctions against Nazra. See <https://bit.ly/32VXLfM>

⁶⁴ "For the first time, 8 female ministers in Egypt's Cabinet," *Egypt Today*, June 14, 2018, <https://bit.ly/38WdDez>. The new women ministers were accomplished experts in their respective fields; Minister of Health Zayed was the president of the Academy of Health Sciences, the chairwoman of the Supreme Committee for Combating Corruption at the Ministry of Health and an advisor to the minister of health and population. Minister of the Environment Fouad had been the assistant environment minister for foreign affairs as well as an assistant professor in the faculty of economics and political science in Cairo University, representing Egypt at several international and continental conferences regarding the Green Climate Fund and climate change.

MPs reached ninety, of which seventy-six were elected and fourteen appointed, for a total female parliamentary share of 15 percent. Dr. Maya Morsy, a well-known political scientist, public policy expert, women's rights advocate, and president of the revived National Council of Women (NCW), expressed pleasure at the appointments. Nonetheless, repression continued, followed by protests in September and October over political and economic conditions. In mid-October 2019, prodemocracy activist Esraa Abdel Fattah was arrested and allegedly beaten.⁶⁵

In summary, Egypt remains a paradoxical case for women's participation and rights. Despite its long history of women's involvement in various forms of collective action and contentious politics, Egypt did not see the formation of a feminist movement, that is, a social movement of women calling for an end to second-class citizenship with demands for women's empowerment across class and religious lines. Indeed, nonfeminist discourses and strategies predominated. The few existing feminist organizations were small and unable to mobilize large numbers of women, especially given Egypt's repressive climate.

Cases of Weak Women's Mobilizations: Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen

Bahrain

Despite the presence of local NGOs, the governmental Supreme Council for Women, the Women's Union umbrella group, several well-known women's rights advocates, and a respectable proportion of women lawyers and professors, Bahraini women's rights and political representation have been limited. According to the World Bank's *Women, Business, and the Law 2020* report, Bahraini women cannot apply for a passport without consent, confer citizenship to children, get a job without permission, or obtain a national identity card on their own. Maternity leave is the responsibility of the employer, and Bahrain has not signed international conventions on maternity protection, domestic worker rights, and the rights of migrant workers and their families.⁶⁶ The 1989 Civil Associations Law, which prohibited CSOs from engaging in politics,

⁶⁵ www.whcc.com/national/egypt-prominent-activist-is-arrested-jailed-for-15-days/5523703/

⁶⁶ Such restrictions on women's rights and distance from international conventions on labor protection are common in the Gulf countries.

served to weaken women's political participation.⁶⁷ As we have noted, the Sunni-Shi'a divide is wide in Bahrain, and the majority Shi'a population endures second-class citizenship.

Bahrain's 2002 constitution guaranteed equality between men and women "in political, social, cultural, and economic spheres, without breaching the provisions of Islamic canon law."⁶⁸ The regime ratified CEDAW in 2002 but with sweeping reservations on family law, citizenship rights, and housing. In the first ever municipal and legislative elections in 2002, Bahraini women were given the right to vote and to run for public office, the result of reforms proposed in the 2001 National Action Charter and 2002 constitution.⁶⁹ In 2005, the government established the Royal University for Women, and in 2008, Houda Nonoo became Bahrain's first female ambassador (to the USA) and the first Jew to be awarded a high bureaucratic and diplomatic post in the Arab world. In 2009, the government adopted a Personal Status Law for Sunni women, albeit based on Sharia principles, and set the minimum marriage age for women at fifteen (previously unspecified). Women married to non-Bahrainis remained unable to pass on their nationality to their children. Unlike men, women could not divorce easily; they had a right to a *khul'a* divorce (as in Egypt) but had to forfeit the *mahr*.⁷⁰

Women's mobilizations were limited; the government placed restrictions and at times ordered the closure of women's shelters and similar initiatives, such as the Respect Movement initiated by the Bahrain Human Rights Society, the National Coalition to Stop VAW in 2005, and the Migrant Workers Protection Society. Women's rights advocates included Mounira Fakhro, Ghada Jamsheer, and Zainab al-Khawaja. Jamsheer was the president of the Women's Petition Committee, a network of Bahraini women human rights defenders who campaign for the codification of Bahrain's family laws and their reform.⁷¹ However, women were underrepresented in government, the parliament, political parties, and the judiciary. Opposition Shi'a groups did not actively promote women's participation. Although Bahrain's Shi'a political movements publicly supported the political participation of women and their rights to representation and

⁶⁷ Fadel (2019). ⁶⁸ Cited in Ahmed (2010): 61. ⁶⁹ Ahmed (2010).

⁷⁰ Ahmed (2010): 60, 68; Pandya (2012): 186.

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch (2013a): 23, 26.

citizenship, by 2011, they had not nominated a female candidate in parliamentary or municipal elections.⁷² Nonetheless, women joined men in the Pearl Roundabout protests, calling for an end to discrimination and for more civil and political freedoms. As noted in Chapter 4, Fakhro played a leading role as an organizer and spokesperson for the protests. Women activists, like the men, did not escape harassment, arrest, or prosecution. Al-Khawaja was detained on numerous charges including insulting the King, and in October 2014, Jamsheer appeared before the Third Lower Criminal Court on charges of defamation via Twitter. In late January 2015, seventy-two Bahrainis, Sunni and Shi'a alike, were stripped of their citizenship "for harming the interests of the Kingdom."⁷³ In 2017, in a country of just 650,000 people, more than 2,600 political prisoners were in jail. Many of the detainees were children, according to a former MP from al-Wefaq, the Shi'a party banned in 2016. Hundreds were exiled, scores barred from travel, and over 300 stripped of their nationality.⁷⁴

Women's rights advocates have called for a uniform family law in line with CEDAW. They oppose the Penal Code that allows a man to be free of charge of rape if he marries his victim. Feminists consider the CEDAW reservations as legalized discrimination and obstacles to women's agency. In 2017, the cabinet of twenty-two ministers had just one female minister. There were only three women in parliament (compared to thirty-seven men), and eight women in the Shura Council (compared to thirty-two men). There was just one female director in the public prosecutor's office and three female prosecutors. Fadel attributes women's continued marginalization to "the continued predominance of the forces of political Islam on the political scene and their ability to control and benefit from women's votes and not nominate any female candidates."⁷⁵

Libya

In the wake of Qaddafi's 1977 declaration of the establishment of the "authority of the people," laws were promulgated in the 1980s to improve the status of women and girls. Law No. 10 of 1984, on marriage and divorce, included the right of a divorced woman with

⁷² Fadel (2019): 107. ⁷³ Esfandiari and Brodsky (2015).

⁷⁴ *The Economist* (2017). ⁷⁵ Fadel (2019): 112.

dependent children to the conjugal home, though not ownership. Law No. 16 of 1985 on pensions guaranteed financial support to widows and divorcees. Libya ratified CEDAW in 1989, albeit with a reservation against Articles 2 and 16. In the 1977 constitution, Article 1 stated that “citizens of the Great Jamahiriya, male or female, are free and equal in inalienable rights.” Article 2 affirmed the rights of women to exercise power, the duty of defense of country, and compulsory education for all children, male and female. The number of girls’ schools increased as did female educational attainment, resulting in a jump of female university enrolment from 410 in 1969/1970 to 64,130 in 1995/1996.⁷⁶ Women were encouraged to participate in politics, serve in the military, form their own revolutionary committees, and travel without formal male approval. Polygamy was not banned but Qaddafi had spoken out against it and a woman could legally refuse to become a second wife. In June 2004, Libya became the first country in the Arab region to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, which allows groups or individuals to petition the UN CEDAW Committee if they believe their rights under the Convention have been violated. Pargeter writes that the regime “pushed for women to become equal citizens” and introduced legislation aimed at reducing discrimination and marginalization. Working women were protected by an array of legal rights, such as generous maternity leave. Following the 2009 election, women occupied 36 out of the 468 seats in the parliament.⁷⁷

Attitudes and values remained conservative, and many of the laws fell short of guaranteeing full gender equality. Although Article 17 of the 1988 Great Green Charter prohibited discrimination based on color, race, creed, or culture, it failed to extend this protection by omitting any reference to women’s rights or status in society. Women’s representation in the consultative structures of government never exceeded 11 percent.⁷⁸ Libya’s labor force was male dominated and few women held influential positions. Pargeter notes that in the 2007–8 academic year at Sebha University, there were fifty-one male and no female Libyan professors or associate professors, and just eleven female lecturers compared with ninety-two male lecturers. Libyan society had yet to embrace the idea of women working closely

⁷⁶ Obeidi (2008): 174, 178.

⁷⁷ Abdulatif (2013); Alqusbi (2019): 39; Pargeter (2010): 293, 295.

⁷⁸ Obeidi (2008): 117.

alongside men. Pargeter cites a woman employee in a government company who told the BBC in 2008: "Our society is very conservative and patriarchal . . . It is unusual for a woman to live on her own and work in the public sector." The absence of modern CSOs or independent NGOs impeded the formation of an independent women's movement. The al-Wafa Association for Human Services, whose aim was to enhance women's social status, had close ties to the state; the al-Wattasimu charity, which organized an international conference on women's rights in Tripoli in April 2007, was run by Qaddafi's daughter Aisha.⁷⁹

Algusbi cites socialization, communal and tribal structures, lack of enforcement of laws, and the weakness of cultural and educational institutions as major obstacles to women's advancement during the Qaddafi era. Despite positive laws and official rhetoric on women's equality, there was limited female public presence: "The regime and women did not have a relationship of trust." Qaddafi's "revolutionary" ideology was also Islamic, which arguably helped entrench conservative and religious attitudes, behaviors and norms. In addition, many Libyans joined the so-called Islamic *jihad* in Afghanistan in the 1980s and early 1990s. This may help explain both the violent nature of the Libyan uprising and its aftermath. As Algusbi explains:

[F]rom the start some in the protest movement wanted it to become a violent armed conflict, particularly those associated with the Muslim Brothers who were fighting in some cities from the first days. They joined the popular movement, not with the intention of toppling the regime and transforming the state into a democratic system empowering the people to live in freedom, dignity, and social justice – but with the intention of transforming Libya in all its capabilities into an Islamist state.⁸⁰

After the violent overthrow of the Qaddafi regime, the National Transitional Council (NTC), formed in March 2011, included two women, Salwa el-Deghali and Shahida al-Nidal, but they faced threats and risks.⁸¹ Libyan women's status was compromised when the state began to collapse following militia attacks and when Islamists and conservative groups sought to establish strict Islamic codes of conduct, including gender segregation in public spaces. The growing security vacuum affected the mobility and visibility of women and girls where,

⁷⁹ Pargeter (2010): 289. ⁸⁰ Algusbi (2019): 39, 43.

⁸¹ Algusbi (2019): 49–50.

according to one survey conducted in 2011, 57 percent of women interviewed felt completely restricted in their movement, and families feared for their safety in the absence of an institutionalized and functioning security sector.⁸² Supporters of the Libyan revolt were embarrassed when the NTC president declared that Libya would revert to Sharia law, that polygamy would be legalized, and that the women's parliamentary quota would be withdrawn.⁸³ Under international pressure, the NTC revoked those statements, and the 2012 election law gave women a minimum of 10 percent of parliamentary seats, but polygamy was reinstated in 2013.⁸⁴ In the 2012 elections, 33 women constituting 17 percent of members of parliament were elected to the 200-member General National Congress, but in the absence of a centralized state or political authority there was no indication that they wielded any influence or ability to set the agenda on political, social, or women's rights issues.

Women's obstacles to participation in public and political life were exacerbated by the presence of armed groups who committed abuses with impunity. People's dismay at the less-than-democratic outcome of the "Libyan revolution" that had been made possible by the NATO intervention revealed itself during the June 2014 parliamentary elections, when just 200,000 Libyans, or 13 percent of voters, went to the polls.⁸⁵ The absence of security and the risks to outspoken women were starkly revealed when Salwa Bughaighis – a human rights and women's rights lawyer from a prominent Benghazi family who was in conflict with Islamists – was shot in her home on the day of the general election, and her husband was abducted. Alqusbi discusses kidnappings, forced marriages, and the series of assassinations that targeted women as well as men. A young reporter, Naseeb Karfanah from Sabha was murdered in May 2014. On November 21, 2014, Sara al-Deeb was shot driving in the Andalus neighborhood of Tripoli. A series of assassinations in different cities on June 26, 2014 signaled the rising danger of involvement in the public sphere, taking the life of a well-known women's rights activist and lawyer, Shadia Salwa, who had participated in the Libyan parliamentary elections. Fariha al-Birkawi was shot to death on July 17, 2014 at a filling station in Derna. On February 17, 2015,

⁸² Abdulatif (2013): 2, 8. ⁸³ Spellman-Poots (2011). ⁸⁴ Fetouri (2015).

⁸⁵ Fahim and Zway (2014). See "Libyans slow to vote for new parliament as violence rages," *The Daily Star* (Beirut), June 26, 2014, p. 10.

a sniper fatally shot Zeynab Abd al-Karim, wife of the former director of the security directorate in Benghazi al-Sayid al-Darsi, who was also in the car with their children and lost his life. The rights activist Intisar al-Hasari, who had called for a civil state, was abducted along with her aunt and both were found killed at dawn on February 24, 2015. Laila Mughrabi, a human rights defender, was forced to flee Libya after threats and attacks against her. According to Alqusbi:

Many other prominent women were systematically assassinated, jailed in awful conditions, or abducted and tortured and found gruesomely murdered since 2012. These actions were aimed at forcing displacement, eliminating women's rights activism, and suppressing women's voices calling for the rule of law and a civil state and society in Libya.⁸⁶

Amnesty International documented many examples of gender-based violence and abuse, including assaults, abductions, sexual violence and defamation on social media.⁸⁷ Alqusbi writes of an incident in November 2016, when a "respectable woman" who had spent a week trying to get her salary drawn but failing because of the bank's lack of liquidity stood angrily protesting in front of the crowds of people gathered in the main square. "She removed her veil, climbed a foundation, and started loudly screaming in the Libyan dialect 'we are dying from hunger, we sold our honor, we are eating our young.' In a striking and shameful way, it gives an idea of the suffering of thousands of women."⁸⁸ The country's appalling socioeconomic conditions as well as citizens' lack of physical security belie the absurd Western declarations of what a post-Qaddafi Libya would look like.

In short, a combination of NATO intervention on the side of the armed rebels, the collapse of the state, the lack of interest in women's rights on the part of the new leaders, and the absence of a strong record of women's rights advocacy in Libya resulted in setbacks to women's participation and rights after the uprising. Meanwhile, Libya became a conduit for people smuggling and migration. It is worth noting that although Alqusbi supported the uprising against Qaddafi, she had to flee to Tunisia: "Years later, I see that the current situation in Libya is one of continuing armed conflict that accompanied the uprising and permeated it from the beginning."⁸⁹ Women in Libya continue to hope

⁸⁶ Alqusbi (2019): 53–4. See also, "Libyans Shocked by Murder of Activist," *The Guardian*, June 27, 2014, p. 28.

⁸⁷ Amnesty International (2018). ⁸⁸ Alqusbi (2019): 55. ⁸⁹ Ibid.: 46.

for a more stable and secure future, and have formed a number of organizations and networks, including the Libyan Women Forum. Their situation prior to 2011 was certainly not ideal, but the aftermath of an unruly uprising with external military intervention has wreaked havoc on women's lives, the country in general, and on refugees and economic migrants.

Syria

Post-independence Syria saw a surge in women's activism and mobilization after the country extended universal suffrage to women in 1949. Syrian women were participants in various popular organizations, including the official women's organization, attending UN women's conferences and benefiting from educational opportunities. Several women later became prominent government spokespersons, notably Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban, a professor of comparative literature knowledgeable of the women's rights movement worldwide.⁹⁰ In the new century, the government pushed through the appointment of female judges, despite considerable domestic opposition, but the proportion of women judges and public prosecutors was just 13 percent in 2010. In 2012, Syrian women held thirty parliamentary seats (12 percent of the total); women's participation and rights were marginal due to the persistence of conservative social and religious norms as well as the absence of legal protections.

The Personal Status Law for the Muslim communities (Syria's Christian communities have their own personal status laws) impedes women's rights and freedoms in the areas of marriage, divorce, and child custody, while the absence of legal protection for women against

⁹⁰ Dr. Shaaban (Ph.D. English literature, University of Warwick, UK) is the Syrian female counterpart to the UK's Theresa May and to such US government spokeswomen as Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice, Condoleezza Rice, and Samantha Power. She is the author of *Both Left-Handed and Right-Handed: Arab Women Talk about Their Lives* (Indiana University Press, 1988, 2009, 2nd ed.), *Voices Revealed: Arab Women Novelists 1898–2000* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), and *Damascus Diary: An Inside Account of Hafez al-Assad's Peace Diplomacy 1999–2000* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012). For her view of the Arab uprisings and of Western influence in the region, see www.commondreams.org/views/2011/02/23/wave-liberation-revolutions-sweep-arab-world-no-room-western-hypocrisy; other interviews are available at http://wn.com/bouthaina_shaaban

domestic violence enables gender-based violence throughout the country, including rape, marital rape, and honor killings. Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees equality under the law for all, but gender-based discrimination in the Penal Code (including disparate laws on adultery) and the absence of a complaint mechanism for women to voice their discontent affects the status of women in society. Syria's 2003 ratification of CEDAW came with a list of reservations about incompatibility with domestic and Sharia law that obstructed its full implementation.⁹¹ In a society tolerant of religious differences, gender was a fault line, and the government accommodated conservative religious pressure. Under the legal definition of rape, spousal rape was excluded as a punishable offense, and under the existing family law, a woman's husband could forbid her from working outside the home or from leaving the country if accompanied by her children. No legislation specifically prohibited discrimination against women, and women did not have equal nationality rights; only Catholic women enjoyed equal inheritance rights. A Muslim woman was not free to marry without the permission of a *wali*, or male marriage guardian, generally the father or a close male relative (*mahram*). A 2005 survey found that 86 percent of rural women had married under the age of twenty.⁹² The labor force was predominantly male.

As noted in Chapter 4, the Syrian authorities were not tolerant of independent organizations. The General Women's Union, affiliated with the Ba'th Party, was the only legally recognized women's organization. Other more independent groups existed but were subject to the legal restrictions, unable to raise funds or hold events. Educated Syrian women found a home in various professional associations. Among the country's political parties, it appears that women were most active and best represented within the Communist Party, making up 20 percent of the membership. Many Syrian women's political awareness was arguably heightened by the state's self-identification as a frontline state in the resistance to Israeli regional hostilities and treatment of Palestinians. Their feminist awareness, by contrast, may have been less developed.

After the 2011 uprising, Syrian women in the opposition created networks such as the Syrian Women for the Syrian Intifada, but the women's rights agenda was soon undermined by the rise of radical

⁹¹ Kelly and Breslin (2010): 459–86. ⁹² Ibid: 460–71.

Islamist groups, and women became marginalized in the Syrian opposition.⁹³ The civil conflict, compounded by external intervention and the rise of ISIS, caused internal displacements and outmigration, with huge consequences for women's well-being and dignity; sexual and gender-based violence was experienced both within and outside Syria. Many refugee women in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey had to endure forced marriages, and many young women were compelled to marry much older men – often from the Gulf sheikhdoms – to avoid poverty and purported loss of honor in the refugee camps and towns.⁹⁴

Studies conducted by economists associated with the Cairo-based, region-wide Economic Research Forum found that in Jordan, the majority (80 percent) of the 1.3 million Syrian refugees lived mostly in “host communities” rather than official refugee camps; 23 percent of Syrian refugee households were headed by women; school enrolment was often late and drop out occurred early, especially for Syrian girls. The refugees in Jordan were largely from Syria's rural and less developed areas; consequently, norms were more conservative, the marriage age lower, fertility rates higher, and few Syrian refugee women worked for pay. Just 23 percent were in the labor force; the labor force rates were 45 percent for men and a mere 4 percent for women. Jackline Wahba reports that most of the Syrian refugees worked informally, without a contract or social insurance, meaning that they remained reliant on aid and were often food insecure, although they appeared to have access to health services. The Jordanian authorities “creat[ed] space for Syrian children in Jordan's public schools, with free education available at the basic and secondary stages,” but this was done by adding multiple shifts to existing schools, which meant overcrowded classrooms, shorter instructional time, and stretched resources. As a result, Syrian children were enrolled in school at substantially lower rates (peaking at 80–85 percent at age nine–ten) than were Jordanian children (near-universal), and lower than the near-universal level of primary school enrolment rates in Syria prior to the conflict and displacement.⁹⁵

⁹³ Ghazzawi (2014); Sinjab (2012).

⁹⁴ Charles and Denman (2013); Ghazzawi (2014); UN Women (2014); Wolfe (2013). Several documentary films have highlighted the difficult decision of refugee Syrian parents to marry off their young daughters.

⁹⁵ Information and data from Krafft and Sieverding (2018); Wahba (2018).

Syrian refugee households experienced relatively high teenage school drop-out rates and early marriage. Women refugees had a higher total fertility rate (4.4) than either Jordan's national fertility rate (3.4) or the Syrian rate prior to the conflict (3.5). The ERF study cites a 2018 UNICEF report to the effect that the median age at marriage among Syrian refugee women was twenty-two, with 25 percent of refugee women being married before age eighteen and 8 percent before age sixteen. Thus "the rate of early marriage among Syrian refugees in Jordan places them above both the MENA average of 17 percent and the global average of 21 percent." The rate of early marriage among Syrian refugees in Jordan was far higher than the average in Syria prior to the conflict, whereby only 13 percent of girls were married before age eighteen as of 2006.⁹⁶

Yemen

In the new century, Yemen was a deeply conservative and very poor country where the government favored military spending over health and education. But, it was not always so. Prior to unification in 1990, the socialist South had made progress in liberating women from patriarchal constraints and granted substantially more rights to women throughout the 1970s. In the 1978 elections, women comprised 10 percent of those elected and appointed to positions within the Supreme Popular Council. The ruling Yemen Socialist Party had branded itself the "custodian of women's rights."⁹⁷

The 1970 constitution called its revolution "an alliance between the working class, the peasants, intelligentsia, and petty-bourgeoisie," adding that "soldiers, women, and students are regarded as part of this alliance by virtue of their membership in the productive forces of the people." In contrast to what was occurring in the North, the ruling National Liberation Front (NLF) moved to enhance the legal status and social positions of women. A new family law was proposed in 1971 and passed in 1974, becoming among the most forward-looking and emancipatory in the Middle East. It established the principle of free-choice marriage; raised the minimum legal age of marriage to sixteen for girls

⁹⁶ All quotes from Sieverding et al. (2018). The total fertility rate (TFR) is the expected number of children per woman.

⁹⁷ Carapico (1998): 32; Dahlgren (2010), esp. ch. 4.

and eighteen for boys (and this in a country where female child marriage was typical); abolished polygamy except in exceptional circumstances such as barrenness or incurable disease; reduced the dower (*mahr*); ended unilateral male divorce; and increased divorced women's rights to custody of their children. PDRY women were given the right to vote in 1970 (in the North it was not until 1983) when universal suffrage was implemented and by 1977 women candidates were competing for electoral office, as well as working in factories, handicraft cooperatives, and local defense militias. Much assistance for the PDRY came from the socialist bloc, and especially the Soviet Union. The General Union of Yemeni Women, formed in 1968, mobilized women throughout the PDRY, monitoring and promoting the family law. A women's conference held ten years after the family law assessed the progress it had made for women legally and socially, and asserted that many women had benefited from the government's policies and especially the family law, but conceded that cultural values and norms remained conservative and more time would be needed for all women to be integrated into economic and political life.⁹⁸

Troubles dogged the South, however. Political and ideological differences between North and South Yemen generated hostility and led to fighting in October 1972, with North Yemen supported by Saudi Arabia and the South by the USSR, but the two countries reached an agreement later that month. The late 1980s brought interest in unification with an eye to oil exploration near the border of the two countries and enhancing both economies. The global context is relevant: the unification plan was occurring during the Gorbachev years, which saw the USSR modifying its domestic and foreign policies, including a gradual withdrawal of its support for the embattled left-wing government in Afghanistan. May 1988 saw steps to reduce tensions between North and South in the interest of unification. The PDRY modernizing socialist experiment ended with unification in 1990 and the victory of the conservative North in the brief conflict of 1994, which all but decimated the Yemeni Socialist Party. As the years progressed and Saudi influence grew in Yemen, women began wearing the full black *niqab* rather than either their traditional colorful dress or the western dress of southern women.

⁹⁸ Lackner (1985); Moghadam (2003b): 95–8; Molyneux (1985).

With the post-1990 changes in the state and political institutions, Yemen exemplifies the unfortunate reality that regression in women's rights, gender relations, and mobilizations has been as much an aspect of the modern history of MENA women as their steady progress has been. After unification, women's status was undermined by Islamist politics as well as lingering underdevelopment and tribalism. Article 3 of the constitution declared Sharia the source of all legislation, and Article 31 stipulated that "women are the sisters of men. They have rights and duties, which are guaranteed and assigned by Shari'a and stipulated by law." Originally, Section 15 of the Personal Status Law prohibited the marriage of girls under fifteen. However, this provision was amended in Act No. 24 of 1999 which abolished the age limit provided that the guardian consented to the marriage and the daughter had reached the age of puberty. At a UNESCO-organized seminar in June 2006 in Amman, Yemeni women's rights advocate Amal Basha, director of the Sisters Arab Forum for Human Rights, criticized the constitutional language and called for reform.⁹⁹ Yemen was a state-party to CEDAW, but an immense gap existed between the formal signature and the reality for the majority of women and girls, mostly poor.

The attention sparked by the forced marriage in 2008 of ten-year old Nujood Ali and other cases of underage marriage gave new impetus to the movement against this practice.¹⁰⁰ A campaign led by the Women's National Committee and several NGOs pushed for eighteen as the age of maturity. In February 2009, parliament passed a law for seventeen as the legal age of marriage, and this despite the objections of the Islamist party, but President Saleh would not ratify it and the parliament's Sharia Committee decided to oppose it.¹⁰¹ There existed neither a law prohibiting gender-based violence nor a concept of marital rape. On "honor killings," the judicial branch was lenient toward men, making such crimes more widespread. The Penal Code's Article 273 criminalized "shameful" or "immoral" acts, making women vulnerable to arrest for acts such as being alone with a non-*mahram* man. Spousal

⁹⁹ Amal Basha delivered an unpublished paper at the seminar "Women, Law and Judicial Decision-Making in the Middle East and North Africa," organized by V. M. Moghadam and sponsored by UNESCO in 2006.

¹⁰⁰ www.nytimes.com/2008/06/29/world/middleeast/29marriage.html

¹⁰¹ Quedghiri (2017). See also Roudi-Fahimi (2010).

abuse was common but rarely reported to police, who, in any event regarded such issues as private family matters. A report by Yemen's Supreme Council for Women's Affairs found that protection and security services for women victims of violence "inadequate and inappropriate." This reality suggests both the power of men in Yemeni society and the weakness and lack of credibility of public institutions. Women had little to no say in politics, few held any political position, and all were required to have the consent of a male guardian to obtain a personal identification card.¹⁰² Perhaps counterintuitively, efforts were made to include women within Yemen's judicial system, such as the enrolment of women in the judicial institute to train as judges. According to the 2007 State-party CEDAW report, there were 32 female judges, compared to 1,200 male judges. The shadow report noted, however, that the women all had become judges in South Yemen, before the 1990 unification.¹⁰³

For women, Helen Lackner writes, the 2011 uprising was an opportunity to express needs and concerns independently, and theirs was a visible presence at the regular Friday demonstrations. Although outnumbered by men, women's presence at the weekly demonstrations enabled the UN to insist on a 30 percent female representation at the National Dialogue Conference.¹⁰⁴ Activist journalist Tawwakol Karman – the "progressive" face of the Islah party – was bestowed a Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 for human rights activism (shared with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee from Liberia), but there was no evidence of prominent roles for women in Yemeni society. The continued conflicts within the country and weakness of the central government prevented women from achieving progress, let alone legal and social equality. The Saleh government had been a partner in the American war on terror, with high military spending to the neglect of socioeconomic development, and when another pro-US government came to power in 2014, Houthi rebels forced it into exile. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia initiated military assaults on Yemen, ostensibly to dislodge the Houthis but killing many civilians, including

¹⁰² Manea (2010).

¹⁰³ See Yemen's civil society shadow report, 2008, with foreword by Amal Basha, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/YEM/INT_CEDAW_NGO_YEM_41_10341_E.pdf

¹⁰⁴ Lackner (2016): 27–8. See also al-Sakkaf (2012).

children and women, in the process. By 2018, the UN and many international aid agencies were calling it the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe. The Saudi-UAE bombardments exacerbated the already vulnerable position of women and girls. (See also Chapters 3 and 6.)

According to a 2016 Oxfam survey held across Yemen, four out of five women said their situation had deteriorated in the last twelve months and one-quarter of Yemeni women aged fifteen–forty-nine said that “access to food, employment and security” was at the top of their list of needs. The report added that many women used “desperate and destructive means” to feed their families, such as reducing their own consumption and nutrient intake. In some extreme cases, women were forced into prostitution. The report concluded that among other drastic outcomes, including women's exposure to insecurity, violence, and death, Yemen's humanitarian crisis had exacerbated gender inequalities.¹⁰⁵

In sum, of all our country cases, Yemeni women fared worst on all indicators; their literacy rate in 2011 was just 48.5 percent versus 82.1 percent for men. The weak position of Yemeni women prior to the Arab Spring, along with long-standing tensions and grievances across the country, presaged both a violent protest movement and a vulnerable position for women and girls. But most devastating has been the humanitarian crisis brought on by the Saudi-led assault on Yemen since 2015. As with women in Libya, Yemeni women hope for better days, and those who are more educated have formed social clubs and associations to revive cultural life and transcend sectarian strife. The Al-Nasieh Club in Aden, for example, “rejects racism, fanaticism, religious extremism and social seclusion.” One young woman among them, Rasha Jarhum, has said that women should lead Yemen in the future, and she regrets having voted “for the one-man show” in 2012.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Oxfam (2016).

¹⁰⁶ www.almadaniyamag.com/english/2017/7/25/al-nasieh-club-in-aden-a-civil-breeze-in-the-face-of-the-artillery-of-war-and-intolerance; and www.almadaniyamag.com/english/2017/7/20/ana-insan-madani-with-rasha-jarhum. Al-Madaniya magazine is still available online, with reports on gender, civil society, culture, history, and other categories. See, for example, <https://al-madaniyamag.com/category/gender/>

Conclusions

In the years prior to the Arab Spring, there were tighter restrictions on women's civil society organizing in Egypt and especially in Bahrain, Libya, and Syria than in Morocco and Tunisia, where independent feminist groups flourished as well as cooperated transnationally. On the eve of the Arab Spring, feminist movements were at various stages of development: absent in Libya, Syria, and Yemen; weak and in abeyance in Egypt; active and semi-institutionalized in Tunisia and Morocco. Indeed, only in Morocco and Tunisia were feminist organizations vocal and visible in the public sphere and public space, with the capacity to enter into coalitions with segments of the political elite as well as other civil society partners – trade unions, human rights organizations, professional associations – to effect legal and policy reforms. Nowhere were gender relations egalitarian, but patriarchal gender relations were most entrenched in Yemen, Syria, Libya, and much of Egypt. As Table 1.2 and Figure 1.3 showed, Tunisia did best on a variety of social and gender indicators on the eve of the Arab Spring. The World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report* of 2011 placed Tunisia at 108 – not a brilliant ranking compared with other Global South countries but just below the UAE, Kuwait, and the Republic of Korea (much richer countries) and higher than all the other Arab countries, Iran, and Turkey. Those differences had implications not only for legal and policy reforms for women, but also for the nature of the Arab Spring protests and the outcomes.

Very high military spending by governments in Egypt, Syria, and Yemen in the years prior to the Arab Spring protests not only misallocated resources that could have been used for deeper and more extensive social development, including improvements in women's well-being, but in retrospect also portended the role of militarism and hyper-masculinity in the Arab uprisings and outcomes. Of our seven cases, Tunisia was the least militarist and militarized. Morocco's military spending was higher, but it enjoyed a robust civil society, influential feminist organizations, and women's presence in an array of professions and occupations. This reality ensured peaceful protests, prevented military intervention, and ushered in a procedural transition toward democratization.

In the years since the uprisings, some governments have responded to women's advocacy and aligned their legal frameworks more closely to

the global women's rights agenda, adopting legislation to remove barriers to women's employment and entrepreneurship or to increase women's political representation. According to the World Bank's *Women, Business and Law 2020* (WLB) report, which measures legal differences between women and men in access to rights needed for economic empowerment, Tunisia and Morocco had the fewest legal restrictions of all Arab countries.¹⁰⁷ Scores across our country cases ranged from highs of 70 in Tunisia and 75.6 in Morocco to the lows of Syria's 37 and Yemen's 27; Bahrain and Egypt received scores of 45–6, and Libya 50. (The perfect score is 100, enjoyed by the likes of Sweden and Iceland.)

Governments also have introduced gender quotas or other mechanisms to increase women's political participation in national and local governance. Those with multiparty, proportional representation systems tend to favor women's political representation. As seen in Table 5.1, the

Table 5.1 *Political systems, electoral quotas, and women's representation, circa 2020*

Country	Type of political system	Type of Electoral quota Single/Lower House (year of adoption)	Women's share parliamentary seats, % (Year)
Bahrain	Monarchy	None/NA	7.5 (2017)
Egypt	Republic (authoritarian military)	Not legislated (2014) ¹	15.1 (2015)
Libya	Failed/divided state	Legislated zipper list (2012)	16.0 (2014)
Morocco	Constitutional monarchy, multiparty	Legislated reserved seats ¹	20.5 (2016)

¹⁰⁷ The WBL index captures mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets, pensions. For details on conceptualization and measurement, see table 2.1 in the 2020 Report: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32639/9781464815324.pdf>

Table 5.1 (cont.)

Country	Type of political system	Type of Electoral quota Single/Lower House (year of adoption)	Women's share parliamentary seats, % (Year)
Syrian Arab Republic	Republic	None/NA	13.2 (2016) 11.2 (2020)
Tunisia	Republic (democratic, multi-party)	Legislated zipper list for both national and local; constitution establishes norms of gender parity	31.3 (2014) 24.9 (2018)
Yemen	Failed state	None/NA	0 (2003)

¹ Note: Egypt also adopted 25 percent female quota for local councils; Morocco 30 percent at subnational level (regional councils).

Sources: Gender Quotas Database/International IDEA, www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/database

highest levels of women's representation in national parliaments are found in Tunisia and Morocco. What is more, according to the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*, of the 152 countries measured for women's political empowerment, Tunisia is not only ranked highest of all MENA countries, but – at number 67 – is ranked higher than Malta, Korea, Greece, the USA (86), and Japan (144).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ See www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf, p. 13.

6 *International Connections and Intervention*

The domestic and regional development of states examined in this book has been inextricably linked to various forms of external influence since the time of state formation, making MENA a highly penetrated regional state system.¹ Analyses of the 2011 uprisings illuminate the forms and degrees of military and nonmilitary influence and intervention that shaped protest outcomes, and which continue to this day. To account for cross-national variation and capture patterns of convergence and divergence, we trace and scrutinize the conditions and processes that motivate intervention calculations by foreign actors.²

We demonstrate that external influence in a penetrated political system is achieved when nonmembers of a national society “participate directly and authoritatively, through actions taken jointly with the society’s members, in either the allocation of its values or the mobilization of support on behalf of its goals.”³ Linking domestic actors with outside agents underscores the role of agency in shaping intervention calculations and allows for a more nuanced analysis of the conditions that determine the extent, level, and type of influence exerted, and for a better assessment of intervention outcomes. Countries that experienced direct coercive or militaristic interventions – notably Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen – produced more violent trajectories. In contrast, and notwithstanding Egypt’s reversion in 2013, we show that the absence of coercive external interventions in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia at the onset of the uprisings produced less violent trajectories and enabled transitional processes to develop organically, albeit differently.

¹ Brown (1984): 4–5.

² This also complements our adoption of Mill’s method to structure the comparison; see George and Bennett (2005): 156.

³ Rosenau (1966): 65.

Framing the Type and Scope of External Influence

The success or failure of prodemocracy social movements in states undergoing transitions from authoritarian rule is inextricably linked to the regional and international external environment. While the role and influence of external actors and forces has been debated within the international relations (IR) literature, particularly relating to linkages between the international system and domestic political and economic development,⁴ earlier scholarship on comparative democratization attributed little significance to non-domestic forces.⁵ External influence took on greater importance following the third wave and the popular uprisings in Southern Europe, South America, and Eastern Europe.⁶ Scholars thus began highlighting the role of external forces and actors within the international environment, with emphasis on support from democratic governments, international organizations, and the regional diffusion of democracy.⁷ Only in recent years, however, have scholars scrutinized the link between external intervention, warring rebel factions, and the intensification of civil wars.⁸ Civil conflict is exacerbated when intervening states pursue an alternative agenda from domestic combatants.⁹ Studies demonstrate how nondemocratic external linkages reinforce authoritarianism by providing material support for ruling autocrats, which hinders democracy promotion as a foreign policy objective.¹⁰

In this chapter, we examine two forms of external influence –foreign aid allocations and disbursements, and coercive military interventions –to elucidate their impact on democratization outcomes and, specifically, on the Arab Spring trajectories. Such forms of external influence may be direct or indirect, coercive or persuasive, or covert and subversive.¹¹ For ease of exposition, we distinguish coercive and noncoercive forms of intervention in our seven country cases. Table 6.1 captures the type and scope of influence in our cross-national comparison.

⁴ Almond (1989): 252–7; Gourevitch (1978); Keohane and Nye (2012).

⁵ Schmitter (2001).

⁶ Huntington (1991); Linz and Stepan (1996); Pridham (2000); Schmitter (2001): 29–30; Schmitz and Sell (1999): 33–9.

⁷ Carothers (1999); Gleditsch and Ward (2006); Hintze (1975): 182–3; McFaul (2010); Pevenhouse (2002); Tilly (1978): 98–9; Whitehead (1986): 25–30.

⁸ Elbadawi and Sambanis (2000); Gleditsch (2007); Regan and Aydin (2006).

⁹ Cunningham (2010): 115–27.

¹⁰ Klass (2016); Meernik (1996): 400; Tansey et al. (2017).

¹¹ Pridham (1997): 11.

Table 6.1 *External influence and outcomes*

Influence Type	Country	Outcome
Coercive/military	Bahrain	Autocratic survival
	Libya	FIRC-failed state
	Syria	Civil war and autocratic survival
	Yemen	Civil war
Noncoercive	Egypt	Authoritarian reversal
	Morocco	Stagnation
	Tunisia	Democratizing

External influence has taken on both formal and informal techniques. Where the former refers to recognized bilateral or multilateral relations between the official agents of states, the latter denotes the means “in which the agents or instruments of one country can reach inside the borders of another country, with or without the approval of the government of that country, and achieve access to the population (or parts of it) or processes of that country.”¹² Intervention seeking to influence outcomes takes many forms, including, but not limited to: supporting political organizations, military and paramilitary groups (including aiding in their formation); taking a formal position that influences the conflict such as sanctions or embargos; providing financial and economic support or penalties to warring parties; using “volunteer” forces; or mediating disputes.¹³

Existing works on interventions in the MENA underscore the region’s hydrocarbon wealth and the geopolitical and security calculations underpinning Western interests in the domestic affairs of states.¹⁴ Brownlee et al. correctly note that the protection afforded to states across the region through “foreign soldiers” shield certain regimes from domestic shocks brought about by civilian opposition.¹⁵ We posit that official development assistance (ODA), alongside more militaristic interventions, are key causal mechanisms for explaining the leverage and protection afforded to autocratic regimes in the region.

¹² Scott (1967): 191–2. ¹³ Pridham (2000): 289–96.

¹⁴ Bellin (2012); Hinnebusch (2015): 3–5, 225–30; Yom and Al-Momani (2008).

¹⁵ Brownlee et al. (2015): 221.

The delivery of military aid, unconstrained arms sales, and foreign aid to autocratic allies in the region signals support and bolsters their coercive capacity. The largest ODA and military aid donors to the MENA are the USA and EU states, which, since the 1990s, have aggressively advocated democracy promotion through military means, political conditionality, and democracy assistance programs. The strategic calculation is to mitigate security threats emanating from Islamists, underdevelopment, demographic changes manifested by high youth populations, and forced displacement.¹⁶

Figure 6.1 shows that Morocco was the third largest recipient of ODA at the onset of the uprisings. ODA to Tunisia and Libya was far lower. By 2016, Yemen and Syria had become the largest recipients of ODA – which, in light of their internationalized civil wars and high casualty rates, has been primarily designated for emergency response and humanitarian purposes. In these cases, aid may serve to exert and maintain influence while military interventions are allowed to continue.

Figure 6.1 also shows that total ODA spiked for Egypt after 2011 but declined after 2013. The two monarchies, Morocco and Bahrain, have received the largest ODA from their main external patrons – Bahrain from the USA and Morocco from the EU. As noted in Chapter 3,

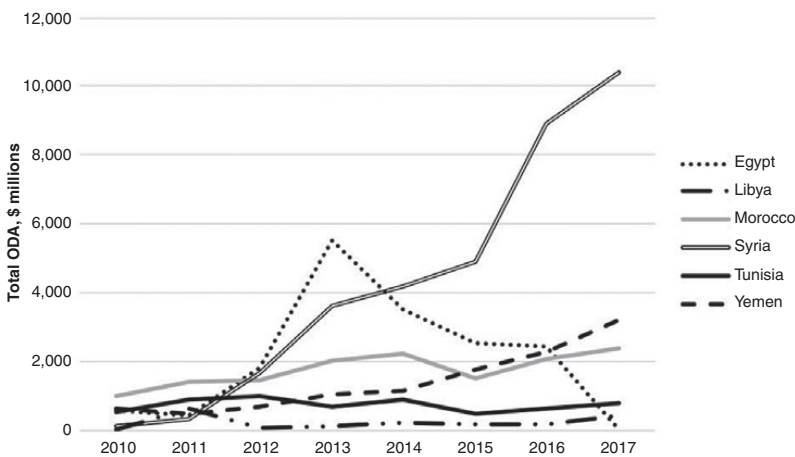


Figure 6.1 Total ODA (in \$ millions), 2010–17.

Source: OECD.

¹⁶ Huber (2008).

Bahrain hosts the US Naval Fifth Fleet and is a key security ally in the Persian Gulf, while Morocco's proximity to Spain and the Southern Mediterranean states makes it a vital ally in the fight against migration into the EU. We concur with Mullin and Patel that EU liberal governance schemes articulated through economic aid packages, technical assistance, and transitional assistance to North African countries since the 1990s, and, in particular, post-2004 following the expansion of the EU neighborhood policy, reflect interventions that attempt to leverage transformations in those countries since the Arab uprisings.¹⁷ Table 6.2 illustrates the scope of US and EU development assistance and the variations across our country cases.

EU relations with North Africa, Eastern Mediterranean states, and West Asia is reflected in partnership initiatives and programs since the signing of the Treaty of European Union in 1992. Specifically, whereas Title V, Article J of the Treaty on European Union outlined a common foreign and security policy for EU member states, Article J.2 committed member states to "develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" as an integral objective of the EU's common foreign and security policy.¹⁸ This enabled the EU, and particularly, in the Southern Mediterranean basin (France, Italy, and Spain), to expand the scope of their foreign policy objectives toward states of concern within the EU's geopolitical and geostrategic orbit. The result was the formation of initiatives such as the 1995 Barcelona Process, also known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), which in 2008 became the Union for the Mediterranean, the 2003 European Neighbourhood Policy, and the 2015 EU-League of Arab States (or EU-LAS).

Since the 1990s, the EU has sought to incorporate MENA region states within evolving frameworks of cooperation that have shifted from incentivizing democracy promotion and political liberalization to prioritizing security and stability. On a normative level, the EMP is the main instrument for the articulation of EU geostrategic interests in the MENA manifested by various democracy promotion and securitization programs. This is best exemplified by the EU-LAS initiative. Emerging within the post-2011 milieu, the initiative does not emphasize democracy, civil liberties, and human rights as integral

¹⁷ Mullin and Patel (2015).

¹⁸ European Union Law, "Treaty on European Union 1992."

Table 6.2 *Total US and EU ODA by sector, 2010–18*

Country	USAID		EU aid (€ millions)		Top 3 DAC sectors		Top 3 donors		Top 3 DAC sectors	
	(\$ millions)									
Bahrain	\$125 million	Conflict, peace & security; government and civil society; multisector	NA	NA			NA	NA		NA
Egypt	\$10 billion	Government & civil society; operating expenses; basic education	€5.5 billion				Germany; France; EU Investment Bank			Rail transport; debt forgiveness; agricultural water resources
Libya	\$580 million	Government & civil society; conflict, peace & security; operating expenses	€91 million				Germany; EU Commission; UK			Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention & reconciliation; material relief assistance & services; higher education
Morocco	\$1.3 billion	Stabilization operations & security sector reform; multisector; direct administrative costs	€10.5 billion				France; European Investment Bank; Germany			Higher education; rail transport; solar energy
Syria	\$4.1 billion	Emergency response; administrative oversight; government & civil society	€7.1 billion				Germany; European Commission; UK			Material relief assistance & services; emergency food assistance; multisector aid
Tunisia	\$825 million	Operating expenses; government & civil society; multisector	€6 billion				European Investment Bank; France; EU Commission			Higher education; formal sector financial intermediaries; general budget support
Yemen	\$2.3 billion	Emergency response; government & civil society administrative oversight	€3 billion				UK; Germany; EU Commission			Material relief assistance & services; emergency food assistance; social protection

Source: USAID Foreign Aid Explorer; European Commission Aid Explorer.

components of EU bilateral relations; rather, it emphasizes security and multilateralism as core areas of interest. The initiative illustrates the paradoxes of EU policies favoring “other prioritized interests – security and economic – such that cooperation with authoritarian regimes on antiterrorism enforcement actions and ensuring secure access to oil prevails.”¹⁹

Table 6.3 summarizes EU partnerships relevant to the MENA region and captures the evolution of EU priorities overtime from an emphasis on democracy promotion, rule of law, and human rights to more securitization considerations relating to migration, security, and economic development.

Socioeconomic aid to Tunisia has supported its democratizing trajectory, particularly, given the robust interactions between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the state, whereas aid to Morocco has had limited democratization net effects given donor preferences in maintaining the security-stability nexus over support for meaningful socio-economic and political reforms.²⁰ We treat Egypt as an outlier case given its reversion to authoritarianism and the violent crackdown on Muslim Brotherhod (MB) demonstrators culminating in the Rabaa massacre in August 2013 following the July *coup d'état* that ousted Mohammed Morsi's government. Egypt's geostrategic relevance for the USA, as evinced by its support for the armed forces, enabled the military to violently suppress dissidents and alter the initial success of the uprising during 2011–12. Nevertheless, the increasing strategic importance of North Africa to American and EU securitization interests, imbued with concerns over migration, transnational terrorist groups, and access to energy resources, underscores its significance for foreign powers.²¹

Figure 6.2 provides a complementary perspective on the levels of external influence over and across our seven country cases, from 2010 to 2019. Here, intervention is measured on a 0–10 scale; note that it has never gone below 4 on that scale since 2010. For Libya, Syria, and Yemen, intervention is highest.

In what follows, we unpack and provide more details on our two categories of noncoercive and coercive forms of external influence over time and since the 2011 uprising. We delineate the historic and

¹⁹ Pace (2009): 49. ²⁰ Dandashly and Kourtellis (2020): 8–9.

²¹ Cook (2019).

Table 6.3 Summary of EU–MENA neighborhood policies

Initiative	Year	MENA Partners	Policy Priorities/Objectives
Barcelona Process (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership)	1995	Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey	Peace, stability, and security: rule of law and democracy, human rights, equality, self-determination, combating terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, nuclear nonproliferation Economy and finance: shared prosperity, socioeconomic development, direct foreign investment free trade, EU financial aid Social, cultural, and human affairs: respect for cultures, human resource and social development, civil society, cooperation to curb illegal immigration and reduction in migratory pressures
European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)	2003, revised 2015	Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria (suspended), Palestine, Tunisia	good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights; economic development for stabilization, security; migration and mobility (“facilitating mobility but discouraging irregular migration”)
Financial arm: European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)			“more for more principle” post-2011 Arab Uprisings: additional reforms from partner states for additional rewards and financial support

Table 6.3 (*cont.*)

Initiative	Year	MENA Partners	Policy Priorities/Objectives
Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), formerly the Barcelona Process	2008	Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (suspended in 2011), Tunisia, Turkey, Libya (observer)	Depollution in the Mediterranean Sea; establishment of maritime and land highways to facilitate movements of goods and people; joint civil protection on prevention, preparation, and response to natural and man-made disasters; investment in alternative energy; Euro- Mediterranean University; Mediterranean Business Development Initiative
EU-League of Arab States	2015	Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria (suspended since 2011), Tunisia, UAE, Yemen	Multilateralism; political dialogue; arms control; counterterrorism; early warning and crisis response; diplomatic exchanges

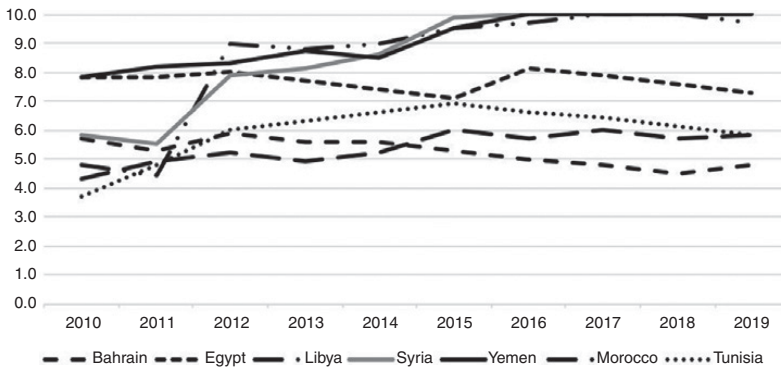


Figure 6.2 External intervention, 2010–19.

Source: Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index. Intervention is measured on a 0–10 scale, 0 denoting no intervention and 10 high intervention. The scope of external influence encompasses foreign governments, armies, military attacks, foreign military assistance and military training, intelligence services, identity groups, multilateral organizations, and humanitarian interventions.

contemporary mechanisms that shaped intervention calculations to illuminate transition trajectories and outcomes.

Noncoercive External Influence: Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia

Prior to and following the uprisings of 2011, Morocco and Tunisia's experience with foreign influence has mostly entailed foreign aid allocations. Both countries have been focal points of EU regional policy toward North Africa, and more specifically, within the Southern Mediterranean basin in relation to trade, immigration, and regional and international security. The regional relationship is a long-standing one. As Damis notes, beginning in 1957 with the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) following the signing of the Treaty of Rome, Morocco and Tunisia became the only two North African states invited to negotiate association agreements with the EEC in order to "maintain and intensify traditional currents of exchanges ... and to contribute to [their] economic and social development."²² France was granted permission to maintain

²² Damis (1998): 92.

preferential trade arrangements with Morocco and Tunisia through a protocol annexed to the Rome Treaty, which cemented its economic and geopolitical hegemony over EU neighborhood policy toward the two countries. Morocco and Tunisia were also incorporated into various EU neighborhood initiatives following the 1994 Mediterranean Dialogue Forum.

EU neighborhood policies since the 1990s have sought to leverage security concerns through socioeconomic and democracy promotion initiatives manifested through bilateral aid packages. The 1992 Treaty on European Union expanded the scope of the EU to promote democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights as integral components of its common foreign and security policy.²³ Growing political instability in North Africa throughout the 1990s – exacerbated by the Algerian civil war, forced migration, and terrorist attacks in France – necessitated the formation of distinct bilateral agreements between the EU and states of concern within the Mediterranean region through the EMP in 1995.²⁴ The expansion of the EU neighborhood policy in 2004 to encompass MENA territories was predicated on labor market trends and migration flows. Migration has always been a security priority for Southern Mediterranean states and the EU, given that, as of 2010, Morocco ranked second with one million migrants to OECD countries and Tunisia fifth with 250,000.²⁵

For the USA, decolonization in the Maghreb between the 1940s and the 1960s heightened its strategic significance as the USA scrambled to replace the UK and France as the dominant power in the Middle East while also containing its rival, the Soviet Union, amid the Cold War.²⁶ In the decades before the collapse of the Soviet Union, American officials saw opportunities to expand political interests in the region. After the assault of 9/11, American foreign policy toward North Africa, and in particular, Egypt and Morocco, was cemented by regional democracy promotion programs to bolster American influence within the framework of George W. Bush's "forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East."²⁷ In 2002, the Bush administration launched the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative in 2003. The programs sought to promote democracy and economic liberalization as strategies to

²³ Pace (2009): 41. ²⁴ Ibid. ²⁵ Hoekman and Ozden (2010): 840.

²⁶ Zoubir (1995). ²⁷ Sharp (2005): 1–2.

contain the Islamist threat. Although the BMENA was limited in scope and funding, the MEPI continues to operate within the State Department's Near Eastern Affairs with two mandates: participatory governance and economic opportunity. The program explicitly refrains from funding programs relating to human rights, humanitarian assistance, LGBT rights, religious freedom, and the environment, among others. Programs for women and youth, for example, are folded into the larger economic opportunity priority.

In the next sections, we provide country examples of the type and extent of noncoercive external influence in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia prior to and following the uprisings, to be followed with examples of coercive forms in our four other country cases. Note that this chapter does not examine the role of NGOs or transnational advocacy connections.

Egypt

As all previous chapters have noted, the uprising in Egypt culminated in the toppling of Mubarak's decades-long autocratic rule and opened a democratizing pathway without external military intervention. Mohamed Morsi, the MB's leader, made history in June 2012 by becoming Egypt's first (and, as of 2020, only) democratically elected and civilian president. However, Egypt's momentary transition and the ensuing autocratic reversal in 2013 reflects a constellation of competing regional and international interests imbued in the maintenance of ideational and material forms of influence.²⁸

On a regional level, Mubarak's ousting created a security vacuum for neighboring Arab Gulf states seeking to influence Egypt's political transition. Parallel and competing forms of intraregional external influence emerged, with Qatar and Turkey on one side, and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the other. Qatar, an MB supporter, became the largest financial backer of Mohamed Morsi's government, allocating some \$8 billion in loans and grants, followed by another \$2 billion from Turkey's Islamist Justice and Development Party.²⁹ In contrast, Saudi Arabia and the UAE sought to maintain Egypt's military rule as well as curb democratic sentiments in their own borders. Following the toppling of the Morsi government, not only did

²⁸ Darwich (2017). ²⁹ Hamid (2014): 215.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE welcome the *coup d'état*, they also demonstrated their unwavering support for the restoration of military rule by General Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi through the allocation of \$12 billion in cash, loans, and fuel subsidies to the military government.³⁰ In contrast, Qatar ordered the central bank after the 2013 coup to return aid it had sent to prop up the Morsi government, and in 2014, Egypt repaid \$2.5 billion, for a total of \$6 billion of returned assistance funds.³¹ Regional external influence was manifested through the provision of ideological and material support of Islamist groups such as the MB by Qatar and Turkey, on the one hand, and the desire to maintain status quo military rule by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, on the other, regimes that welcomed Egypt's authoritarian-military reversal and repression of the MB.

For the USA, Egypt's long-standing geostrategic and diplomatic position as a leader in the Arab world became especially advantageous in the 1970s, after Nasser's death. The signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978 cemented the American-Egyptian alliance and recalibrated America's securitization interest. The development of this relationship and the support and influence exerted by various US administrations on successive autocratic incumbents is evinced by America's aid commitment to Egypt.³² Between 1946 and 2016, the USA distributed \$78.3 billion in bilateral foreign aid to Egypt.³³ As Brownlee notes, "The US government plays a role analogous to those of domestic coalition members (the director intelligence, the minister of the interior, the minister of defense), shaping the calculations, priorities, and resources of the regime."³⁴ Egypt's strategic importance stems from its control of the Suez Canal, which facilitates the transportation of an estimated 13 percent of global trade and its containment of Islamist groups. Faced with the January 2011 anti-Mubarak protests, therefore, the Obama administration was divided between foreign policy "realists" and the "idealists." Traditional foreign policy realists including Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton cautioned against the views espoused by President Obama's young aides, described as "swept up in the drama and idealism of the moment" in advocating for Mubarak's removal.³⁵ President Obama initially sought to balance American strategic interests during the

³⁰ Ulrichsen (2014): 180–1. ³¹ Reuters (2014). ³² Brownlee (2012): 10–12.

³³ Sharp (2018). ³⁴ Brownlee (2012): 10. ³⁵ Clinton (2014): 283–4.

uprising, but he ultimately lent his support to the prodemocracy protests by asking Mubarak to “present to the people of Egypt its next government.”³⁶

Despite its position as a key patron of military incumbents in Egypt, the USA failed to exert pressure on the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) to allow the democratically elected Mohamed Morsi to govern without military oversight.³⁷ The Obama administration averred that “the United States does not support particular individuals or political parties, but we are committed to the democratic process and respect for the rule of law.” Yet, it subsequently declined to label the military overthrow of Mohamed Morsi a *coup d’état*.³⁸ Moreover, in contravention of its own laws relating to foreign aid allocation and human rights, the USA immediately disbursed over \$1.2 billion dollars in military aid to SCAF. Military aid dropped in 2014 due to pressure from congressional members, including Senator John McCain,³⁹ the Obama administration resumed aid in 2015. Predicated on maintaining a geostrategic relationship, American external influence in Egypt emboldened the military and SCAF’s intervention and suppression of Egypt’s 2011 uprising leading to autocratic reversal. As noted by Grewal and Kureshi, American foreign aid allocations enabled the al-Sisi regime to remain in power after ousting Morsi in 2013, because aid is conditional on a veneer of government legitimation, even if through an electoral façade.⁴⁰ Thus, foreign aid can limit the prospects for democratization through electoral manipulation as a tool of legitimation of ruling autocrats.

Morocco

Morocco experienced mass protests in February 2011 calling for political and socioeconomic reforms. As discussed in Chapter 4, the M20F movement garnered mass support from diverse sectors of Moroccan society, including left-leaning activists, human rights and civil society organizations, women’s groups, and Islamists. Absent direct intervention, the uprising in Morocco remained endogenous and organic in scope and composition. However, while Morocco was spared direct

³⁶ Cooper et al. (2011). ³⁷ Hamid (2014): 214.

³⁸ The White House (2013). ³⁹ Cirilli (2013).

⁴⁰ Grewal and Kureshi (2019).

and coercive interventions seen in Bahrain Libya, Syria, and Yemen, its geostrategic position on the western flank of North Africa bolsters its significance for Western powers, namely the EU and the USA. External influence in Morocco is manifested most notably through securitization aid and bilateral security and trade agreements.

Morocco's geostrategic value for the EU and USA stems from its curtailment of the flow of migrants to the EU from sub-Saharan Africa and the wider MENA region. Bilateral and multilateral aid and economic and security partnerships reflect Morocco's geostrategic significance for Western states. As shown earlier in the chapter, Morocco has been the largest beneficiary of ODA, receiving \$1.4 billion dollars from the USA from and €10.5 billion from the EU between 2010 and 2019, with France, the European Investment Bank, and Germany constituting the top three donors, making Morocco the fourth largest EU ODA recipient since 2007.⁴¹ US official aid disbursements to Morocco are largely economic; still, Morocco is the second largest recipient, after Egypt, of American-bilateral aid in North Africa, with aid disbursements totaling \$1.74 billion between 1998 and 2018.⁴² The USA and France are also the top two largest weapons suppliers to Morocco. Between 2008–18, the value of American arms exports to Morocco totaled \$2.05 billion and France \$1.44 billion, with exports spiking post-2011 and continuing steadily since the uprisings.⁴³ The post-9/11 War on Terror coupled with the presence of a robust Islamist opposition altered American posture toward Morocco, although the latter did not directly participate in the War on Terror. Bilateral ties between the USA and Morocco were strengthened in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in Casablanca in 2003 and 2007, and in Marrakesh in 2011, by al-Qaeda inspired groups, including *Salafia Jihadia* with its ties the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group. Following the 2003 terrorist attack in Casablanca, negotiations on economic and trade ties accelerated, culminating in the 2004 signing of the US-Morocco Free Trade Agreement (FTA). For the USA, the FTA with Morocco underscores a political and strategic motivation to contain the Islamist threat within the context of post-9/11 and the War on Terror which necessitated the formation of "security communities" embedded in the underlying assumption that "trade leads to tolerance."⁴⁴ Echoing Bernard Lewis'

⁴¹ European Commission, EU Aid Explorer.

⁴² USAID, Foreign Aid Explorer.

⁴³ SIPRI, Trend Indicator Values arms exports.

⁴⁴ White (2005): 599.

assertions about the “Roots of Muslim Rage,” US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick viewed the FTA with Morocco as a valuable tool for containing the Islamist threat by opening Muslim societies to the following:

Young leaders [are] struggling for the soul of Islam. [This struggle] is a battle of leaders who embrace tolerance against extremists who thrive on hatred. It is a conflict of economic reforms against those who fear modernization because it threatens their power to intimidate. And it is a context of those who welcome closer ties with the West against those who see us as an enemy.⁴⁵

At its core, bilateral ties between the USA and Morocco are predicated on maintaining security and stability in North Africa as tools for combating jihadists through the Global Counterterrorism Forum, and more recently, the global coalition to defeat ISIS.⁴⁶ Morocco also hosts the United States Army African Lion, an annual multinational military exercise led by the US military and the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces. As the Moroccan case shows, noncoercive Western influence is not devoid of militaristic aspects.

Tunisia

Like Egypt and Morocco, Tunisia did not experience direct military intervention in the uprising that succeeded in toppling an Arab autocrat. Unlike Egypt and Morocco, Tunisia historically had low military spending. External influence has come largely in the form of international development assistance and economic cooperation, including bilateral and multilateral aid from the USA and EU member states.

Although Tunisia’s phosphate and agricultural exports, along with tourism, were always sources of foreign currency and government revenue, the economy also has depended on foreign direct investment, external loans, and other forms of international cooperation. In the years before 2011, Tunisia was the second largest recipient of EU bilateral aid, and between 2010 and 2019 came second to Morocco with €6 billion in aid allocations. While ODA by sector from the EU to Tunisia prior to and following the uprising in 2010–11 has focused on social and economic development, American ODA to Tunisia has been

⁴⁵ White (2005).

⁴⁶ US Department of State, www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-morocco/

security and military oriented. After Tunisia's experience with terrorist attacks on soldiers and tourists, security became a priority, and military spending increased. For the EU and the USA, foreign aid – socioeconomic, political, and military – similarly has been motivated by the need to contain Tunisia's terrorist threats.

For France, which began to experience Islamist terror attacks in the mid-1990s, during the Algerian civil conflict, Tunisian president Ben Ali was considered a "bulwark against instability in the region and an important safeguard for French and European commercial and strategic interests."⁴⁷ French foreign aid to Tunisia spiked in the mid-1990s under President Jacques Chirac, increasing from 594 million French francs in 1994 to 1.1 billion francs in 1995.⁴⁸ Into the new century, France became Tunisia's largest trading partner and aid donor; its economic interests stemmed from business ties with Tunisia that infused trade and economic exchanges with neoliberal reforms and control over economic migration. Over a thirty-six-hour visit to Tunisia in 2009, French Prime Minister François Fillon signed eight bilateral accords on finance, transportation, civilian use nuclear cooperation, and an eighty million euro bilateral aid package for water management and vocational training as part of "controlled management of migration flows."⁴⁹ When Fillon was asked about the absence of talks about human rights and democratic reforms in Tunisia, according to a Wikileaks report, the prime minister responded that France "'doesn't give lessons' on human rights, and that the world 'asks more of Tunisia' because it is more developed and more 'similar to us,' adding that human rights problems 'arise pretty much in every country in the world' and that democratization is a 'continuous process'."⁵⁰ The following year, those issues were at the forefront of the Tunisian uprising in 2010, culminating in Ben Ali's downfall after three weeks of mass protests.

Economic, social, and political aid thus became an instrument of influence as France and other European powers sought to "fight together the forces of regression" through modernization and democratization, where Tunisia was seen as a "pole of stability and peace."⁵¹ Foreign aid and neoliberal economic reform packages to Tunisia from France and Western powers enabled Ben Ali to rally external support

⁴⁷ Wood (2002). ⁴⁸ Ibid. ⁴⁹ Wikileaks (2009). ⁵⁰ Wikileaks (2009).

⁵¹ Wood (2002).

for his regime under a securitized agenda that prioritized modernization, stability, and cooperation to curb Islamist terrorism. The Ben Ali regime benefited by receiving substantial external financial, technical, and military assistance while its political deficits and human rights record were discounted.⁵²

American interests in Tunisia have mirrored those of its European counterparts. Historically, the fracturing of relations with France following Bourguiba's 1956 declaration of independence allowed the USA to gain greater influence through foreign aid. Country assistance programs became extensions of American foreign policy to bolster development projects after WW II and at the height of the Cold War as various administrations sought to leverage influence through aid. The 1957 bilateral agreement committed the USA to an estimated \$250 million of aid allocations between 1957–61, followed by another \$180 million, three-year commitment in 1962.⁵³ Bourguiba was considered friendly and sympathetic to the West and a moderating force on the Third World.⁵⁴ Aid was thus rationalized in strategic terms, given Tunisia's geographic position as an Arab, African, and Western oriented country, a moderating force in the Third World, and a "model of how a small country with few natural resources could succeed through sensible economic and foreign policies with the help of adequate aid and fruitful cooperation."⁵⁵ Thus, between 1957 and 1964, financial aid to Tunisia from the USA through grants, development loans, and technical assistance grew from \$8.5 million to \$212.1 million and food aid increased from \$17.8 million in 1957 to \$395 million in 1964.⁵⁶

US assistance made Tunisia a key ally in the Maghreb, amassing \$349 billion from 1987 to 2009 in military aid and economic assistance through the US-North Africa Economic Partnership designed to promote American investment and integration in North Africa.⁵⁷ The global War on Terror also catapulted Tunisia into America's orbit of influence in North Africa. American foreign aid to Tunisia spiked post-9/11, with disbursements totaling \$924 million from 1998–2018, increasing substantially between 2010–18.⁵⁸ US arms exports to Tunisia spiked from 2011 to 2018, with values totaling \$222 million,

⁵² Murphy (2014): 240–1. ⁵³ Krassowski (1968): 75, 79.

⁵⁴ Krassowski (1968): 80. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 80. ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 115.

⁵⁷ Murphy (2014): 244. ⁵⁸ USAID, Foreign Aid Explorer.

in comparison to the \$124 million sold from 1998 to 2010.⁵⁹ American-bilateral relations have prioritized counterterrorism and military security. Prior to 2011, foreign aid to Tunisia was allocated primarily through military grants and sales given Tunisia's strategic importance of the US Africa Command in fighting al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and affiliated groups. Since 2011, there has been a focus on political reform and institutional capacity building, with the Obama administration committing \$570 million in 2015 along with two major loan grants to facilitate Tunisia's democratic transition in support of political, economic, and security reforms.⁶⁰

As was discussed in Chapter 3, the rise of AQIM and affiliate organizations such as Ansar Al-Sharia of Tunisia reoriented American aid commitments toward securitization and counterterrorism initiatives. The threat that radical Islamists posed for American foreign policy and counterterrorism initiatives across the MENA region was reflected in the Obama administration's 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism. In the wake of the uprisings, the administration perceive responsive governance as a counterterrorism strategy, noting "promoting representative, responsive governance is a core tenet of US foreign policy and directly contributes to our CT goals . . . governments that are responsive to the needs of their citizens diminish the discontent of their people . . . effective governance reduces the traction and space for al-Qa'ida, reducing its resonance and contributing to what it fears most-irrelevance."⁶¹ With the rise of the Islamic State, Tunisians constituted the largest foreign fighter recruits, sending an estimated 3,000 nationals between 2014 and 2017, with another 27,000 who were prevented by Tunisian authorities from leaving the country.⁶² In 2017, Congress introduced the Combating Terrorism in Tunisia Emergency Support Act to strengthen counterterrorism operations, the country's internal security agencies, and military readiness, and to aid economic and civil society development and border security.⁶³ The American military has increased its operations in Tunisia amid the growing threat and influence of transnational terrorist Islamic organizations in the country and the turmoil in neighboring Libya, which has continued to threaten Tunisia's domestic security and stability. These factors have contributed to the growth of

⁵⁹ SIPRI, Trend Indicator Values, Arms Exports.

⁶⁰ Obama and Essebsi (2015). ⁶¹ The White House (2011).

⁶² Zelin (2018): 5. ⁶³ United States Congress (2017).

American overt and covert military operations inside the country, best exemplified by a 2017 battle against AQIM militants by the US Africa Command.⁶⁴ In 2019, USAID committed a \$335 million five-year aid package to Tunisia.

Coercive Influence: Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen

Countries that experienced coercive and militaristic forms of external influence and interventions, in addition to foreign aid allocations, were Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. As such, they faced both coercive and noncoercive forms of external influence and intervention. Foreign aid to Bahrain came as securitization aid from the USA, followed by a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bailout; aid to Libya dwindled in 2012 after NATO's disastrous regime change intervention as the Government of National Accord struggled to maintain control of the country; humanitarian aid to both Syria and Yemen increased exponentially at the same time as the countries experienced internationalized civil wars. As the two-level analysis will show, militaristic interventions altered the trajectory of the uprisings while foreign aid leveraged noncoercive forms of external influence.

Bahrain

As noted in Chapter 3, Bahrain is the only Arab country, including Iraq, that is demographically a Shi'a majority, and like Iraq, its domestic political developments are vulnerable to external meddling. Historically, Western interest in Bahrain was solidified with the transfer of the headquarters of the British Residence to Manama from Bushire on the Persian coast following India's independence in 1947. Both the Muharraq airfield and the Jufair naval base became strategic points for British military and diplomatic interests in the region until Bahrain's independence from Britain in 1971.⁶⁵ In 1995, Bahrain became home to the United States Fifth Fleet, which is tasked with ensuring the free flow of oil and trade from the region, safeguarding waterways from international piracy, and containing Iranian power in the Persian Gulf.

Bahrain's geostrategic position dictates its value for regional and international states seeking to maintain influence in the Persian Gulf.

⁶⁴ Nsaibia (2018). ⁶⁵ Lawson (1989): 118.

As a member of the GCC, Bahrain's political development is entwined with its geopolitical importance for neighboring GCC states. It was the first Arab Spring country to experience a direct military intervention against the popular prodemocracy uprising. Under the guise of the GCC's Joint Defense Agreement – which stipulates that any aggression on one GCC member state amounts to an act of aggression on all GCC members – Saudi Arabia and the UAE led the military intervention, which quickly quelled Bahrain's protest movement and facilitated the repression of protestors by domestic security forces. The military intervention included the importation of Sunni foreign mercenaries from Pakistan as well as troops from neighboring states. By March 2011, the Bahraini government had received 1,000 troops from Saudi Arabia, 500 from the UAE, and police support from Qatar to suppress the demonstrations.⁶⁶ After the repression of the protest movement, and in a move to alleviate Bahrain's growing domestic debt and placate protestor demands, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE allocated a \$10 billion financial aid package known as the Gulf Marshall Plan to help the country embark on fiscal and economic restructuring.⁶⁷

Bahrain's geostrategic position protected the monarchy from international condemnation for the use of lethal force against unarmed protestors during the initial uprisings. Shortly after the police used live ammunition on and killed unarmed protestors at the Pearl Roundabout in February of 2011, Robert Cooper – senior advisor to the EU's foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton – defended the crack-down, adding that “accidents happen.”⁶⁸ Hillary Clinton, then Secretary of State, justified Obama's decision to directly intervene in Libya while withholding decisive action against Bahrain's monarchy. In seeking to argue against the perils of adopting a “one-size-fits-all” policy regarding intervention, she opined that:

America has many important national interests in the region, and they will not always align perfectly, despite our best efforts. “We'll always have to walk and chew gum at the same time.” That was certainly true in Bahrain. America will always have imperfect partners who doubtless view us as imperfect too, and we'll always face imperatives that drive us to make imperfect compromises.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ ICG (2011). ⁶⁷ Toumi (2011). ⁶⁸ Rettman (2011).

⁶⁹ Clinton (2014): 360.

The subdued response of the international community to Bahrain's violent crackdown on unarmed protestors cements exogenous impediments to democratization in the tiny archipelago, while the regional response seeks to maintain the governing status quo of the ruling al-Khalifa family. External intervention by regional actors exacerbated tensions from opposition forces and has reinforced the resilience of Sunni-Arab Gulf monarchies in withstanding and quelling domestic opposition.⁷⁰

Libya

International intervention during the first few months of the uprisings in 2011 was largely driven by the need to protect civilians from direct attacks by the regime, the strategic intentions and calculations of regional and international players, and the absence of Qaddafi allies in the region.⁷¹ While long-standing animosity toward Qaddafi by the Arab emirs of the Persian Gulf fueled their proclivity toward international intervention in Libya, the support and participation of regional states such as Jordan, Qatar, and the UAE provided the regional legitimization for the intervention.⁷² On March 17, 2011, Resolution 1973 of UN Security Council – adopted by a 10–0 vote with abstentions from China, Russia, Brazil, Germany, and India – invoked the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) civilians and authorized the use of force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter following the implementation of a no-fly zone and an arms embargo in early 2011. NATO's Operation Unified Protector was tasked with the implementation of the Security Council's resolution and became a key international actor in Libya's civil war. By August 2011, foreign troops from Britain, France, Jordan, and Qatar were directly engaged in ground operations and were actively supporting warring rebel factions against the Qaddafi regime. American-led NATO airstrikes, France's recognition of the rebels as Libya's legitimate government, and direct military support from regional states during the early months of the civil war bolstered the efforts of rebel fighters operating inside the country.⁷³

⁷⁰ Colombo (2012): 7–8. ⁷¹ Lynch (2012): 172–3.

⁷² Engelbrekt and Wagnsson (2014): 6. See also Prashad (2012): 7.

⁷³ Kadlec (2014): 638.

Islamist groups had been kept in check under Qaddafi, but support for Islamists on the part of Gulf States shifted the playing field as more anti-Qaddafi Libyans came to realize that to succeed they needed the help of groups such as the Libyan Islamic Movement. This dependency opened the political space for the previously suppressed Islamists to influence the governing trajectory of post-Qaddafi Libya. Qatar's direct military intervention in the form of ground troops, the training of military personnel in Libya, and its support for Islamists in the country escalated tensions between rebel factions.⁷⁴ During the uprising, Qatar provided an estimated \$400 million to various rebel groups, including Islamists such as the 14 February Martyrs Brigade, and supplied them with large amounts of weapons, including anti-tank missiles, and infantry training by Qatari Special Forces, making Qatar "a link between rebels and NATO forces."⁷⁵

More recently, external powers have competed for control. Turkey's involvement in Libya has bolstered the bargaining power of Islamist factions in Tripoli and safeguarded \$18 billion worth of construction and investment projects to maintain Turkish leverage over access to oil and gas in the Mediterranean.⁷⁶ To counter Qatari and Turkish influence, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt lent support for Qaddafi-era General Haftar against the internationally recognized government in Tripoli to contain Islamists and maintain strategic access to the Mediterranean. In a telephone call to the Libyan warlord in April 2019, President Trump hailed Haftar's efforts to combat terrorism, secure Libya's oil resources, and the shared vision to democratize Libya.⁷⁷ These competing strategic calculations merely exacerbate Libya's chaotic political landscape a decade after the 2011 uprising and the NATO military intervention.

British and French support for regime change in Libya was motivated by Qaddafi's long-standing anti-Western and pan-Africanist policies, but also by the need to secure access to its oil reserves given that Libya ranks ninth in the world, with an estimated 48.36 billions of barrels of proven oil reserves.⁷⁸ A memo to Hillary Clinton on September 15, 2011, exposed by Wikileaks, revealed British and French intentions to secure Libyan oil concessions for British and French oil firms from the newly established National Transitional Council. These were

⁷⁴ Black (2011). ⁷⁵ Ibid. ⁷⁶ Hacaoglu (2019). ⁷⁷ Holland (2019).

⁷⁸ US Energy Information Administration, www.eia.gov/

expressed during the September 2011 trip to Libya by Nicolas Sarkozy and David Cameron. The memo states that:

According to knowledgeable individuals, as part of this effort, the two leaders, in private conversations, also intend to press the leaders of the NTC to reward their early support for the rebellion against Muammar al Qaddafi. Sarkozy and Cameron expected this recognition to be tangible, in the form of favorable contracts for French and British energy companies looking to play a major role in the Libyan oil industry. According to this source, Sarkozy feels, quite strongly, that without French support there would have been no revolution and that the NTC government must demonstrate that it realizes this fact . . . this source indicates that the government of France is carrying out a concerted program of private and public diplomacy to press the new/transitional government of Libya to reserve as much as 35% of Libya's oil related industry for French firms, particularly the major French energy company TOTAL . . . the French external intelligence service (*Direction Generale de la Securite Exterieur*e)/General Directorate for External Security – DGSE) is using sources with influence over the NTC to press the French position.⁷⁹

Although Britain advocated for Qaddafi's overthrow, British diplomats and intelligence officers maintained contacts with Qaddafi's government, including his son, Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, throughout 2011 as a hedge against the failure of regime change.⁸⁰ For France, Qaddafi's ouster was motivated by strategic and personal ambitions. On a strategic level, Qaddafi's purported goal of establishing a pan-African currency based on the Libyan golden dinar would have destabilized France's enduring influence over Francophone Africa and potentially disrupt trade, financial, and cultural relations with numerous African nations.⁸¹ On a personal level, the corruption scandal involving Qaddafi's estimated €50 million contribution to Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 presidential campaign may have motivated Sarkozy's willingness to send French warplanes to Libya and support the NATO intervention there, while restraining direct military action in Syria.⁸²

The shift in the international agenda from humanitarian assistance in UN Security Council Resolution 1973 to regime change by directly supporting NTC rebel forces against the regime, coupled with the use of Special Forces and "unofficial partners" through various rebel

⁷⁹ Wikileaks (2011a). ⁸⁰ Wikileaks (2011b). ⁸¹ Wikileaks (2011c).

⁸² Penney (2018).

chains of commands, markedly altered the initial R2P mandate of international intervention in Libya.⁸³ External intervention accelerated the proliferation of rebel groups, producing a security vacuum sustained by arms imports to warring rebel groups allied with foreign states seeking to exert influence in the country. As late as 2020, Libya was the site of a proxy war with Qatar and Turkey supporting the government and Islamists in Tripoli, and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt supporting General Haftar.

Syria

In June 2016, the *New York Times* published a US State Department Syria dissent memo signed by fifty-one diplomats urging the Obama administration to engage more decisively with the Assad regime in Syria. In advocating the use of limited military force, the diplomats concluded that the use of military force to enforce a Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) would be one way to compel the Syrian regime to negotiate a political solution in good faith. They also saw “merit in a more militarily assertive US role in Syria, based on the judicious use of stand-off and air weapons, which would undergird and drive a more focused and hardnose US-led diplomatic process, leveraging the International Syrian Support Group to end the daily mass killing of civilians.”⁸⁴ From the onset of popular uprising in 2011, external intervention in Syria’s uprising divided the opposition and produced a highly protracted internationalized civil war.⁸⁵

Russia and China, the Assad regime’s strongest international allies, vetoed critical UN Security Council resolutions calling for economic sanctions against Syria under Chapter IV, which would have facilitated a military intervention in the country. Major global powers such as the EU – Syria’s largest trading partner – along with the USA, Turkey, and the Arab League, all imposed targeted economic and diplomatic sanctions by either freezing the assets of Syrian individuals and companies, prohibiting the importation of Syrian oil, and halting economic investment in the country. The civil war, external intervention, international and regional sanctions, the rise of IS, and economic and reconstruction disruptions collectively contributed to Syria’s economic decline.⁸⁶

⁸³ Egnell (2014): 230. ⁸⁴ Fisher (2016). ⁸⁵ Associated Press (2013).

⁸⁶ The World Bank (2017).

Regional states have been prominent in exacerbating Syria's civil war through material and ideational support for anti-regime rebel factions. Qatar aided Syrian rebel factions by an estimated \$1–3 billion and as much as seventy military cargo flights via Turkey in the first two years of the armed rebellion.⁸⁷ Saudi Arabia provided infantry weapons to Syrian rebels and contributed substantially to the militarization of rebel factions, spending millions of dollars training Islamist groups such as the Army of Islam (JAI), a union of forty-three Syrian groups, and the Army of Muhammad.⁸⁸ Private and government funding for warring Islamist factions altered the uprising's trajectory.⁸⁹

Financing for radical Islamist groups posed a political and strategic dilemma for the USA and its Western allies. In a leaked email to senior advisor John Podesta outlining American strategic engagement in the Middle East post-ISIS/ISIL, then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton noted that in addition to the reliance on more covert military operations, the United States must “use our diplomatic and more traditional intelligence assets to bring pressure on the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to ISIL and other radical Sunni groups in the region.”⁹⁰ At the same time, a 2012 “Syria update” email from Jacob (Jake) Sullivan to Hillary Clinton approvingly wrote that “AQ is on our side in Syria,” referring to al-Qaeda leader al-Zuwahiri's “call on Muslims in Turkey and the Middle East to aid rebel forces.”⁹¹

As Syria's largest trading partner prior to 2011,⁹² Turkey's involvement in the uprising was motivated by Iran's growing influence along with Syria's support for and arming of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK)-affiliated Kurdish rebels, which Turkey has long deemed a terrorist organization. With the region's growing sectarian polarization, Turkey pivoted toward Western and Gulf persistence on regime change in Syria.⁹³ Dubbed a “jihadist highway,”⁹⁴ Turkey aided and armed Islamist rebels and became a conduit for Islamists' entry into Syria to contain Iranian influence.⁹⁵ Turkey also facilitated the formation and organization of the splintered Free Syrian Army. The containment of the PKK and its offshoot, the Syrian-based People's Protection Units (YPG), has entrenched Turkey's intervention as evinced by

⁸⁷ Khalaf and Smith (2013). ⁸⁸ Mazzetti et al. (2013). ⁸⁹ Dickinson (2013).

⁹⁰ Wikileaks (2014). ⁹¹ Wikileaks (2012). ⁹² Sezer (2011).

⁹³ Haas (2013): 162–3. ⁹⁴ Uslu (2016): 784–5.

⁹⁵ Gursel (2014); Pamuk and Tattersall (2015).

Operation Olive Branch of January 2018 in Syria's Afrin district culminating in Turkey's invasion of Northeast Syria in late 2019. As an alliance between Turkish forces, Turkmen militias, and Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army rebels, the Operation rearmed jihadist Islamists and Syrian rebels.⁹⁶

With differing motivations, Iranian influence and intervention in the Syrian uprising sought to safeguard Iranian interests and a regional balance of power amid evolving geopolitical realities. Historically, the convergence of the Iran-Syria alliance axis from 1979 to 2011 was predicated on systemic grievances marked by anti-imperialism, resistance to foreign and Western hegemony and meddling in the region, the Iran-Iraq war, and Egypt's tacit alliance with Israel following the signing of the Camp David Accords.⁹⁷ Although Shi'a Islam's holiest sites are located in the Iraqi cities of Najaf and Karbala, Syria is also home to venerated Shi'a sites including the shrines of Sayda Zaynab and Sayda Ruqaya, the Shrine of Husayn's head in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, the Mashhad al-Husayn in Aleppo and the mausoleum of 'Ammar bin Yasir, Uways al-Qarani, and Ubay bin Ka'b in Raqqa.⁹⁸ For Iran and Syria, the deployment of religious and sectarian rhetoric reifies the symbolic importance of these sites and serves as a powerful recruiting tool for Shi'a militias from neighboring Iraq and Lebanon to maintain the geopolitical nexus that binds the alliance between the two countries and their proxies. Iran provided material support through an estimated \$16 billion financial and economic contribution to the Syrian regime since 2012 and has supplied the regime with three lines of credit totaling over \$6.6 billion since 2013.⁹⁹ For Iran, stabilizing the Syrian regime opens a potential market for Iranian exports amid stifling US sanctions; financial aid to Syria is conditioned by funding restrictions that prioritize lines of credit for Iranian companies operating in Syria.¹⁰⁰

Russia's backing of the Syrian regime is motivated by a constellation of historic and contemporary ideational and material interests tied to domestic, regional, and international security. On October 8, 1980, the Soviet Union had signed a Treaty of Friendship with Syria aimed at strengthening political, economic, military, scientific, technological, cultural ties and respect for state sovereignty, national independence

⁹⁶ Al-Khalidi (2018). ⁹⁷ Darwich (2019): 77–88. ⁹⁸ Pinto (2007): 110.

⁹⁹ Hatahet (2019). ¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

and the principles of noninterference, and the “elimination from the practice of international relations of any manifestations of the policy of hegemonism and aggression.”¹⁰¹ Given this history between the two nations, and in the aftermath of the Libya regime change disaster, Russia joined China (as members of the five permanent Security Council members with veto powers) to veto UN Security Council resolutions invoking humanitarian intervention over the use of chemical weapons. Domestically and regionally, Russia’s struggle with radical Islamist groups in the North Caucasus region reached its zenith with the declaration of the so-called Caucasus Emirate, a jihadist organization of mostly ethnic Chechens in 2007 that in 2015 declared allegiance to the Islamic State, leading to Russia’s direct conflict with IS in Syria.¹⁰²

Russian foreign aid to Syria is motivated by financial and economic access to Syrian markets for Russian firms, post-war reconstruction concessions, and securing oil and gas investments for private and state owned firms, including a fifty-year contract to mine phosphate at the Sharqiyah field near Palmyra, with 30 percent of revenues reserved for the Syrian state.¹⁰³ Russia also has become a key contender in Syria’s agricultural sector through control of strategic crop fields in the country, making it the leading supplier of wheat (reaching an estimated 1.5 million tons in 2018). Russia has secured agreements for the export of vegetable oil, fertilizers, and to build and repair flour mills, grain silos, and water treatment facilities across the country.¹⁰⁴

Western external influence equally altered the trajectory of the uprising in 2011 and the internationalization of Syria’s civil war. Most EU member states joined Operation Inherent Resolve in 2014 to neutralize ISIS/ISIL in Iraq and Syria. France’s Sarkozy became the first international leader calling for Assad’s ouster in 2011, advocating a Libya-style intervention for the purpose of regime change. Both Hollande and Macron pursued an active foreign policy to tackle ISIS/ISIL while also limiting Assad’s capabilities, with Hollande admitting to arming Syrian rebels in 2014 to neutralize both targets.¹⁰⁵ Paralleling its motivations in Libya, engagement in Syria seeks to rebrand France as a committed global power that can counter American hegemony, sustain its international identity, and rebuild its alliance with Sunni-majority states.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Survival (1981). ¹⁰² ICG (2016). ¹⁰³ Hatahet (2019). ¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Olivas-Leal (2014). ¹⁰⁶ Ramani (2015).

Britain joined Western countries in condemning Assad's use of chemical weapons. As part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the UK committed resources and manpower through the RAF's Operation Shader, which, since 2014 has targeted ISIS/ISIL fighters in Iraq and Syria, killing an estimated 4,000 members.¹⁰⁷

The Syrian uprising opened a window of opportunity for the USA to intervene militarily, financially, and logistically. From the onset, the Obama administration repeatedly called for Assad's ouster and spear-headed efforts to assemble a multilateral humanitarian intervention at the UNSC. Following the Ghouta chemical attacks in August 2013, the deadliest to date, regional and international allies looked to the USA to topple the Assad regime through direct intervention in light of President Obama's "red line" ultimatum. On August 30, the administration announced "with high confidence" that the Syrian regime had used nerve agents and was the main culprit in the Ghouta chemical attack, requesting formal authorization from Congress on September 6, 2013 for the use of military force in Syria. The Bill was never voted on in the House as the Obama administration accepted a Russian mediated agreement with the Syrian regime to eliminate its chemical weapons stockpile and to allow UN inspectors access to ensure regime compliance. Within a week, Syria had joined the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and had eliminated an estimated 1,300 tons of chemical agents to avert military intervention.¹⁰⁸ Obama's reticence to intervene without congressional approval reflects intervention fatigue of American lawmakers and the public since the Iraq war fiasco ten years prior, particularly given that at the time, 67 percent of Americans sided with the president in delaying military airstrikes in favor of more diplomatic efforts, and 48 percent said the USA should not use military force even in case of Syrian noncompliance.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic stopped short of identifying the Syrian regime as the primary culprit and attributed the August 2013 attack to "unknown perpetrators."¹¹⁰

As noted earlier in the chapter, however, the USA deployed covert military and intelligence resources and clandestine missions to

¹⁰⁷ Kearney (2019). ¹⁰⁸ Sanders-Zakre (2019).

¹⁰⁹ Polling Report, www.pollingreport.com/syria.htm ¹¹⁰ UNHRC (2019).

destabilize the Syrian state in support of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and Kurdish militias in the Northeast. Such covert missions bolstered the power of warring rebel groups fighting inside Syria, further fragmenting the country. The CIA under President Obama's direction launched Operation Timber Sycamore in 2013 to covertly provoke regime change in Syria by tilting the balance of power to domestic anti-Assad rebel forces. Costing an estimated \$1 billion, the Operation, initially proposed by then CIA Director David H. Petraeus in 2012, with resolute lobbying from regional states such as Jordan, Israel, and Saudi Arabia – trained rebels in Jordan and Turkey and provided weapons to FSA fighters vetted by the CIA.¹¹¹ In addition, the Pentagon launched a \$500 million program that sought to train and equip 5,000 anti-Assad Syrian rebels in 2014 in response to the Islamic State's advancement. The Pentagon halted the costly program aimed at creating "capable, indigenous forces" in 2016 after it produced only a handful of fighters (a mere 5–7 by some estimates) due to rebel desertions.¹¹² To supplement the failure of the Train and Equip program and with ISIS/ISIL posing an increasing threat to domestic, regional, and international security, the Pentagon went on to pursue a \$2.2 billion Syrian rebel covert program to funnel Soviet-era weapons, including, but not limited to AK-47s, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, and mortars, to Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) comprised mostly of Kurdish YPG forces working alongside Arab and Assyrian militias in the Jazira region of Northeast Syria.¹¹³ Subsequently, President Trump launched the first unilateral airstrikes targeting the Syrian regime in April 2017 in response to another chemical attack, in Khan Shaykhun. The administration also joined France and the UK in launching airstrikes against multiple Syrian government targets following the 2018 chemical attack in Douma.¹¹⁴ Syria also has been the target of attacks by Israeli forces, which ostensibly target Iranian installations. In March 2019, the Trump administration formally recognized Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, occupied since 1967. Syria is arguably the site of the most pervasive forms of external military meddling by regional and international actors.

¹¹¹ Mazzetti et al. (2017). ¹¹² Shear et al. (2015).

¹¹³ Angelovski and Marzouk (2017).

¹¹⁴ Both attacks were attributed to Syrian government forces according to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

Yemen

Yemen's geopolitical position and external ideational and material concerns have played a critical role in international intervention in the country. Russia's strategic interest in Aden's port and airspace in the former socialist South (the PDRY) posed a threat to regional states and their allies. Saudi Arabia, in particular, sought to counter the former's influence by supporting, materially and financially, Islamist groups in the North against the socialist South prior to and following the 1990 unification. The decline of the power of the South post-unification enabled Yemeni President Saleh to pursue Gulf-centered strategic alliances as exemplified by Yemen's formal request of 1996 to join the GCC, a request that was considered but declined. Saudi Arabia was also instrumental in providing financial assistance to the Islamist Islah Party, among other ultraconservative Islamist groups and politicians,¹¹⁵ to counter the PDRY-backed National Democratic Front during the initial phases of unification in 1990–4. The 9/11 terrorist attacks and the growing threat of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula made Yemen a strategic asset for the United States and the largest recipient of counterterrorism funding of foreign militaries between 2006–14.¹¹⁶ Although development and counterterrorism aid were tied to American securitization interests, lackluster reforms and Saleh's complex relationship with al-Qaeda shifted American support for Saleh in the lead up to the 2011 uprisings.

Post-2011 reinforced the strategic importance of Yemen as a national security concern for the GCC. Saudi Arabia, in particular, took an acute interest in brokering Saleh's exit strategy and Yemen's transitional trajectory, including the formation of the National Dialogue Conference and its agenda with the help and support of Washington.¹¹⁷ Regional influence in Yemen, particularly on the part of the GCC as "emerging interventionists," exacerbated tensions in an already tumultuous regional environment.¹¹⁸ Regional intervention was ramped up after the failure of the 2013 National Dialogue conference to produce a sustainable political solution to Yemen's uprising, coupled with the Houthi takeover of the capital Sanaa and the strategic Port of Hodeidah (Yemen's largest port) and their expansion into southern Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula by 2014.

¹¹⁵ Dresch (2000): 141–2, 172–3. ¹¹⁶ Phillips (2019): 1133.

¹¹⁷ Sharqieh (2013). ¹¹⁸ Young (2015): 10.

In 2015, Saudi Arabia, in partnership with the UAE, launched Operation Decisive Storm – an anti-Houthi international coalition backed by the USA, UK, and France. The Saudi-led coalition has produced the world's worst humanitarian crisis, decimated Yemen's already fragile infrastructure, precipitated its socioeconomic decline, and fueled southern secessionism. As Baron notes, Saudi Arabia's support for Saleh's VP, Field Marshall Hadi, reaffirms historic relations between the Kingdom and the two Yemeni leaders who often relied on Saudi intervention to quell Houthi rebellions prior to 2011. The UAE, on the other hand, has been a keen supporter of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) – a separatist movement seeking to reverse Yemen's 1990 unification, and whose leaders profess kinship ties with the Emiratis due to shared cultural and religious relations.¹¹⁹ Thus, for Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Yemen serves as the nexus point for the articulation of ideational and material foreign policy interests. It underpins the Gulf states' deterrence strategy against Iran and the possible formation of a Hezbollah-like proxy in the Arabian Peninsula.

The USA, UK, and France have sustained the Saudi-led coalition through arms sales, logistical support, and costly refueling missions by US Central Command and US Africa Command. The USA and UK have been key weapons suppliers for Saudi Arabia and the UAE; according to SIPRI data, from 2015–17, arms exports to Saudi Arabia from the USA reached \$6.9 billion and exports from the UK to Saudi Arabia totaled over \$2 billion. Similarly, US arms exports to the UAE totaled over \$2 billion while the UK sold over £7 billion worth of weapons and dual-use equipment to the Gulf Emirate between 2008–17, with purchases spiking post-2015.¹²⁰ Weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, while congruent with the history of American foreign policy toward the Kingdom,¹²¹ have directly contributed to the violent trajectory of Yemen's civil war since 2015. Additionally, France's military intelligence recently acknowledged that French weapons sold to Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been used in Yemen, contravening

¹¹⁹ Baron (2019): 5, 7. ¹²⁰ Action on Armed Violence (2018).

¹²¹ Arms sales from 1950–80 totaled \$41.1 billion, surpassing sales to Israel (\$36.2 billion) over the same time period. See SIPRI Arms Transfers Total trend-indicator value dataset. Saudi Arabia was also the largest recipient of US military exports in arms and equipment during the height of the Cold War, totaling \$23.3 billion from 1950–82, see Klare (1984): 254.

earlier assurances from President Macron that such arms sales were strictly for defense purposes.¹²²

Iran's support for the Houthis in Yemen is a continuation of its strategic axis of alliances with state and non-state actors in the region including Lebanon's Hezbollah, the Syrian state, and Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces. Iran's support for Houthi rebels includes supplying the group with weapons, aiding the group's control of key territories and shipping ports, and undermining disarmament efforts by disregarding the international arms embargo created under the 2015 UN Security Council Resolution 2216.¹²³ Although the Houthis had nominal ties with Tehran prior to 2011, they have sought to revive their ancient Zaydi Imamate as distinct from Iran's Twelver Shi'a Islam. Overall, Iran's strategic calculation in its support of the Houthis is to defeat al-Qaeda and ISIS, gain access to geographic areas of interest to project influence, confront regional rivals, and resist US encroachment in the region.¹²⁴

The geopolitical and geostrategic interests of international and regional powers, namely the USA, the GCC, and the EU, have precluded prospects for justice, accountability, and reconciliation in the aftermath of Saleh's thirty-year reign and his regime's conduct during the initial phases of the uprisings in 2011. It remains to be seen if there will be any accountability for Yemen's near destruction and the humanitarian crisis its people have endured since the Saudi-UAE intervention.

Conclusions

This chapter has examined the role and impact of coercive and non-coercive forms of external influence in explaining divergent outcomes and trajectories of our seven country cases. In the absence of direct interventions, the protest movements in Tunisia and Morocco, and Egypt before 2013, developed organically. All three countries nonetheless have benefited from foreign aid allocations and commitments from donor countries and agencies seeking to maintain geostrategic leverage – Morocco and Tunisia from the EU, and Egypt from the USA. Noncoercive forms of influence manifested through military and socio-economic and political aid packages to the aforementioned states

¹²² Dodman (2019). ¹²³ Sharp (2019): 8–9. ¹²⁴ Juneau (2016): 649.

enabled Western states to exert a great degree of influence prior to and following the uprisings. Although the Obama administration withheld aid from Egypt in 2014 in the aftermath of the 2013 military coup, American aid resumed in 2015. Democratization aid ostensibly rewards or encourages good governance, civil society, and youth and women's empowerment, but Islamism and growing forced displacement and migration changed Western powers' calculus in favor of securitization.

Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen experienced direct military interventions that produced more violent trajectories resulting in autocratic survival and protracted civil wars and a failed state. We note two pivotal temporal moments that affected the scope and extent of foreign influence in our country cases: the post-9/11 global War on Terror and the 2010–11 uprisings. We also highlight the agenda of GCC states as “emerging interventionists” in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings – especially in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen – and how that agenda intersected with the strategic calculations of Western powers such as the USA, UK, and France. Likewise, Russia and Iran have intervened to support allies and prevent the GCC-Western alliance from dominating the region. Ultimately, foreign intervention by regional and international actors, predicated on pursuing divergent ideational and material interests, altered the course of the prodemocracy movements, leading to autocratic survival in Bahrain and Syria, a failed state in Libya, and two internationalized civil wars in Syria and Yemen. Under those conditions, prospects for regional democratization have been put on indefinite hold.

7 Findings and Conclusions

The Arab Spring uprisings and the collapse of regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen produced a still-growing literature that began by emphasizing the “revolutions” that “took the world by surprise” and “shook the world.” The year 2011 was arguably exceptional, notable not only for the Arab protests but also for Occupy Wall Street’s protests against the 1 percent, the Spanish *indignados*’ and Greek citizens’ outrage over the effects of the Great Recession and the subsequent austerity measures, and the student movement in Chile for the return of free education. The 2011 movements were celebrated for their horizontal, diverse, and democratic nature, although in at least two cases – Spain and Greece – new political parties and leaders emerged. The Arab Spring, however, not only produced a “modest harvest” with a procedural democratic transition in Tunisia and constitutional reforms in Morocco, but it also descended into armed violence, repression, external intervention, and failed states. Our book has examined two sets of cases: Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, which saw nonviolent protests and relatively less repression on the part of the state in the initial transitions, and Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, where states responded to the protests, whether violent or nonviolent, with force and repression. Egypt failed to embark on a successful democratic transition and reverted to authoritarianism. Why pathways to democratization were blocked in most cases and why the outcomes were so divergent were the central questions of this book.

Why did the Arab Spring not produce region-wide robust democracies? In earlier work, Michael Hudson emphasized the lack of state legitimacy, while Eva Bellin and Ellen Lust, among others, stressed the robustness of the coercive apparatus of many MENA countries as principal reasons for the absence of democratization. The authors of the *Arab Human Development Report 2004* saw the authoritarian state as increasingly isolated from society. In their study of the Arab Spring’s “modest harvest,” Brownlee et al. explain the different

outcomes and absence of region-wide democratization in terms of oil rents and the durability of monarchies, a point earlier made by Hinnebusch. Similarly, Elbadawi and Makdisi cite resource rents, along with “home wars,” with an emphasis on the “lingering Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” to explain the absence of democratization.¹ In our book, we have argued that the interaction of four explanatory variables affected each country’s capacity to embark on a path of democratization. We concur with Becker and Goldstone in noting that the speed of state building and the efficacy of postrevolutionary outcomes are dependent on the ability of new regimes to exploit key prerevolutionary factors rooted in the civil service and military, human and cultural capital, and external support.²

To address our key questions, and building on the literatures on revolutions, democratic transitions, and the international relations of the region, we offered an integrated and holistic explanatory framework that accounts for structural and societal factors and external and internal forces. Whether or not a region or cluster of countries is prepared to embark on a democratic transition depends on socioeconomic, institutional, and cultural preconditions along with the nature of international connections and interventions. In the cases that we examined, those structures, institutions, and social forces shaped the possibility for a democratic transition, or – conversely – prevented it. Using Mill’s method of difference, we looked for what our comparative analysis across seven countries did not have in common, and we deployed four independent but interacting variables that could explain the different outcomes. Specifically, we have accounted for the very different types of uprisings that took place and their divergent outcomes through an explanatory framework resting on the nature of the state and political institutions, civil society, gender relations and women’s mobilizations, and international influences. We considered other explanations and acknowledged that our variables do not account for *all* possible relevant independent variables that affected the uprisings’ trajectories; nevertheless, our method fulfills three core assumptions.³ First, the role of external influence is a sufficient condition that explains divergence in the relationship between countries in

¹ Bellin (2004); Brownlee et al. (2015); Elbadawi and Makdisi (2017a, 2017b); Hinnebusch (2006).

² Becker and Goldstone (2005): 183. ³ George and Bennett (2005): 155.

Group A versus Group B; second, we have accounted for prior explanations that center on other causal variables prior to our analysis; and third, we have factored in all the country-cases of the Arab uprisings that represent the diverse causal pathways for capturing divergent outcomes.

Our analysis differs from those that emphasize the presence or absence of oil revenues, monarchical systems, or societal divisions. Our seven cases included two monarchies (Bahrain and Morocco) and two oil-rich economies (Bahrain and Libya). In 2011, Bahrain was a more divided society than Syria given that Syrian Sunnis were more integrated in the political, economic, military sectors of the state than were the majority Shi'a in Bahrain. Moreover, both Bahrain and Syria had minority-led regimes, but only Syria faced international opprobrium because of it. Libya's oil wealth did not protect the regime. Instead, what all the violent and failed cases have in common is external intervention. (See Table 7.1 for summary.)

The uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya and the 20 February Movement (M20F) in Morocco were largely populist, cross-class phenomena without hierarchy, leadership, or ideology. There has been much discussion of the horizontal and nonhierarchical feature of contemporary mass movements, including the Arab Spring. This feature was both a strength and weakness of the uprisings. The absence of a well-organized secular-democratic protest movement in Egypt allowed the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and the military to assume control. In Libya, the absence of modern political institutions, a strong civil society, or an organized democratic protest movement enabled regional factions to support their own militias and challenge a new government that was both weak and uninterested in women's rights.⁴ In Syria and Yemen, the preponderant role of outside forces precluded prospects for smooth transitions, let alone reconciliation and justice. In contrast, the M20F in Morocco had the backing of progressive political parties; that coalition along with strategic

⁴ At the fourth annual conference of Stanford University's Center on Democracy, Diplomacy, and the Rule of Law, held in Tunis, March 28–9, 2013, the Libyan speaker was asked about the masculine nature of political participation and the labor force – compared with Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe – and what strategies were in place to change this. He responded that there was no strategy to increase women's employment and claimed that: "Women don't want to work because their husbands work." (Moghadam notes.)

Table 7.1 *Factors favorable to democratic outcome (yes/no) and actual outcome*

Country	State/regime & political institutions	Civil society	Gender & women's mobilizations	External intervention	Outcome
Egypt	No	No	No	No	Authoritarian reversal
Tunisia	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Democratic transition
Morocco	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Constitutional reforms; stalled democratization
Bahrain	No	No	No	Yes	Authoritarian survival
Libya	No	No	No	Yes	Failed state
Syria	No	No	No	Yes	Internationalized civil war
Yemen	No	No	No	Yes	Internationalized civil war

decision-making on the part of the King resulted in the subsequent constitutional amendments – even if dissident Moroccans feel that the amendments fell short of codifying genuinely democratic and egalitarian principles and practices, and the country's democratization has largely stalled. In Tunisia, a vibrant civil society and political parties intent on a successful democratic transition and willing to compromise toward that end were key factors in Tunisia's more favorable outcome.

Social Media and Social Movements in MENA

The political revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt were called “Facebook revolutions,” organized by a technologically savvy, albeit leaderless, youth generation active in civil society. Web-based social networks proved critical for users in alerting activists, gaining momentum, and informing the world as events unfolded on the ground. Even if “Facebook revolution” is an exaggeration, the role of information and communication technologies in the MENA prodemocracy

movements should not be underestimated. For too long, authoritarian states had had a monopoly not only on the means of violence, but also on the means of communication, especially with monopolized television, radio, and print journalism. New media technologies increasingly undermined the regimes' censorship efforts. For example, the cyber-journalism of WikiLeaks damaged the legitimacy of Tunisian president Ben Ali beyond repair. The Internet generally opened up space for Tunisian dissidents through blogs, discussion forums, and music. The street demonstrations were captured on cell phone cameras and then uploaded as videos to known opposition sites and blogs, such as ATunisianGirl.blogspot.com (created by the late blogger Lina Ben Mhenni⁵), Nawaat.org, and *Les Révolutionnaires de la Dignité*, whose contents served as news feeds for satellite networks like Al Jazeera.

In Egypt in 2008, "Facebook girl" Israa Abdel Rattah, just in her twenties, used Facebook to organize a campaign of civil disobedience to protest the deteriorating conditions of the average citizen. On the morning of a planned general strike by workers, April 6, 2008, she was arrested and detained for eighteen days. The violent suppression of the workers' strike resulted in the formation of the April 6 Youth Movement. On January 18, 2011, Asma Mahfouz uploaded a short video to YouTube and Facebook in which she announced, "Whoever says women shouldn't go to the protests because they will get beaten, let him have some honor and manhood and come with me on January 25." The same day, Wael Ghonim created a Facebook page in honor of Khaled Said, the young Egyptian blogger killed by police. The Mahfouz video went viral, countless Egyptians learned about Khaled Said, and the planned one-day demonstration became a popular revolt. The temporary internet shutdown that marked the first week of the revolt highlighted the significance of new and alternative media. Another useful tool to Egyptian protesters was "Speak to Tweet." The work of a Zurich-based activist, this tool emerged to allow Egyptians to leave voice recordings by calling an international phone number. The recordings were automatically transcribed as Twitter messages, which were then picked up by a separate group of volunteers and translated into various languages on a website called Alive in Egypt. Camera cell phones, social media, opposition blogs, chat rooms, and Al Jazeera's "continuous coverage" and advocacy

⁵ Lina Ben Mhenni tragically died in January 2020, aged just 37.

journalism all served to form a feedback loop for information, keeping the story alive and transmitting it to other Arab countries and to Western publics. Although al-Jazeera did not publicize the Bahraini protests, the February 14 Day of Rage Movement coalesced around different social media platforms to organize and mobilize largely youth populations in the country. In Syria, regime opponents captured and disseminated images of state repression to invite external opprobrium and intervention. The growth of internet use in Arab Spring countries helped dissidents and activists circumvent state censorship, plan protest tactics, and shape international public opinion.

However important the use of social media in protest action, it was not the determining factor in the course or outcomes of the Arab Spring uprisings. Nor should social media be celebrated as a force for liberation. Surveillance technology has been used quite effectively by repressive regimes, corporate entities, and transnational terrorist organizations like ISIS.⁶ We have argued that the determining factors in the nature of the Arab Spring protests and the outcomes were a combination of structural and societal factors and forces. What follows is a summary of our findings.

States and Political Institutions

Although all seven states were authoritarian, the configuration of political forces, the institutional setup, and state-society relations differed. An example is the power of the military and of government spending on the military, as illustrated in Figure 3.2 in Chapter 3. An examination of military expenditure as percentage of GDP confirms a similar pattern. SIPRI data show that between 1999 and 2010, military spending was highest in Syria and Yemen, followed by Bahrain, and lowest in Tunisia followed by Libya and Egypt. Morocco's military spending remained fairly constant at around 3 percent of GDP. Lawlessness, state fragility, and the proliferation of militias in Libya following the 2011 NATO intervention did not prevent, but in fact may have contributed to, the dramatic rise in military spending. According to SIPRI data, Libya's military spending increased to 7.6 percent in 2013 and 15.5 percent in 2014. Tunisia's military spending was low until 2013 when it began to rise in the aftermath of domestic security threats.

⁶ Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (2019); Timm and York (2012).

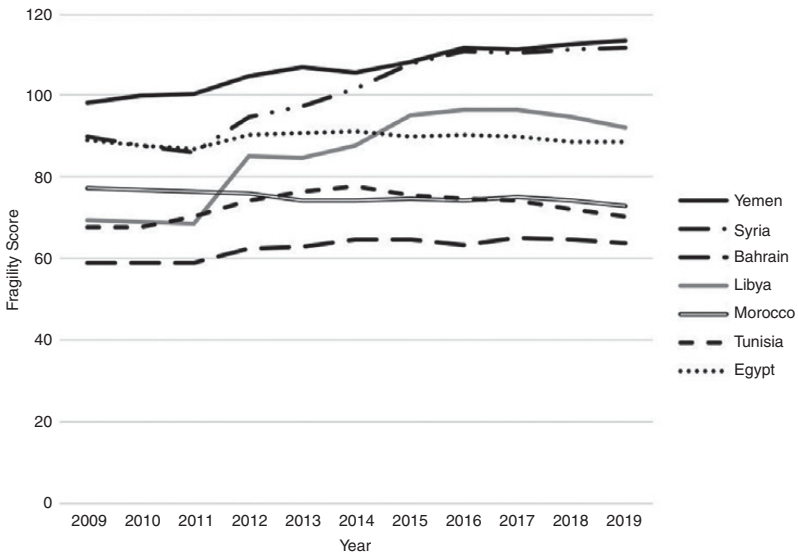


Figure 7.1 Fragile State Index score.

Source: Fund for Peace.

Did military spending contribute to state fragility after the Arab Spring? Yes and no. Egypt's strong military strengthened the state apparatus and enabled a military-civilian alliance to marginalize and then ban the MB and remove the country's democratically elected president. Syria's strong military protected the regime from domestic and external enemies, despite the array of forces intent on regime change. For Yemen, excessive military spending put social development, and thus a stronger modern middle class, in a residual position, helping to reinforce tribalism and regional divisions. For Libya, the international factor is arguably most salient in the collapse of its state post-2011. As seen in Figure 7.1 all our country-cases experienced a rise in their fragility, measured by an aggregated value of twelve social, economic, political, and military indicators. Countries that underwent a more violent transition (Yemen, Libya, and Syria) rank highest on the state fragility scale versus the less violent cases, although Egypt's fragility score is considerably higher than the scores for Morocco and Tunisia. Bahrain's fragility score is lowest, no doubt because of its protection by its GCC neighbors and international

protection afforded to the region by the presence of the US Fifth Fleet. The overall trajectory of the two sets of cases elucidates a path-dependent trend that explains cross-national variation.

As Fukuyama argues, neither democracy nor markets can flourish properly in the absence of a competent state.⁷ The failure of the Arab Spring in most countries was essentially a failure of state capacity and well-functioning political institutions, whether because of international intervention or domestic dynamics, or both. In Egypt, the MB failed to understand the difference between winning an election and winning total power, so the country's middle class reluctantly reembraced authoritarianism. In Yemen, the concentration of power by those from the northwest regions, along with regionalism and tribalism, plagued the 1990 national unification and Yemen's transition, which in turn was exacerbated by external intervention. In Libya as well as Yemen after 2011, the inability of the state to legitimately monopolize the means of violence, as in Max Weber's ideal-type conceptualization, led to state collapse. By contrast, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia retained relatively stable and functioning states, though with considerable differences. Egypt's strong military overwhelmed the MB and established military-led authoritarian rule, which it was able to do in the absence of influential political parties with strong social bases of support. In Morocco, political space had expanded considerably since 1998, certainly when compared with the "years of lead" under King Hassan II. The constitutional amendments further opened up political space, although dissidents and many young people associated with the M20F complain of the continuing power of the *makhzen* and of police surveillance.⁸ In terms of state capacity and the quality of political institutions, Tunisia did best. Without an overweening military and with political parties almost equally aligned along left-right and secular-Islamic axes that were also willing to compromise, Tunisia managed to design and embark on a relatively successful democratic transition.

⁷ Fukuyama (2014).

⁸ During a visit to Rabat in May 2014 Moghadam saw daily demonstrations by young people and by relatives of political prisoners in front of the Justice Ministry. Several young people told her of a guitarist friend's arrest because of a song he wrote that was deemed derogatory of the monarchy. A former minister expressed disappointment that Morocco did not pursue the "Spanish model" wherein the monarch reigns but does not rule. (Personal communications.)

Civil Society

Prior to the Arab Spring, all the cases of incipient or emergent civil society operated under conditions of authoritarianism and were often managed, controlled, or co-opted by the state. In some cases, civil society was generated by citizens in a bottom-up effort, with notable examples including feminist organizations, trade unions, youth groups, and human rights organizations. In another example, Egypt's MB, an entity that spanned both civil society and political society, engaged in grassroots mobilization and recruitment, influenced several social and legal institutions, and offered services to low-income supporters in a manner that Gramsci would call "a war of position." It was thus no surprise that it was able to come to power, albeit briefly. In general, the nature of the state and its institutions, along with the size and social involvement of modern middle classes, governed the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs). The literature on civil society in rentier states points to restrictions that either subvert or co-opt civic engagement, although GCC states, notably Bahrain in 2011, saw challenges from social and political forces and civic associations. In Libya, petrodollars coupled with coercion meant that the regime never managed to cultivate the civic polity necessary to transform subjects into citizens and rule through legal-rational means. Within the first six months of the toppling of Qaddafi's regime, an estimated 361 CSOs were registered in Benghazi and an estimated 500 in Tripoli, and Freedom House quickly moved Libya three spots from 7 to 4 in its 2013 ranking.⁹ But this could not last – as it did not in Iraq in the immediate aftermath of the 2003 US invasion.¹⁰ Qaddafi's toppling was meant to usher in a democratic transition and a new regime friendly to the West. Instead, violence flared almost immediately, and in 2020 the country remained marked by fragmentation along power bases ruled by various militia that had taken part in the "revolution."

Of our seven cases, modern CSOs – trade unions, feminist groups, student groups, human rights organizations- were strongest and most organized in Morocco and Tunisia. In Tunisia especially, progressive-minded citizens were found across the array of professional associations, and they played an important role in the post-2011 democratic transition and its new institutions, such as the various High

⁹ Achcar (2013); al-Werfalli (2011). ¹⁰ Isakhan, Mako and Dawood (2017).

Commissions and the Constituent Assembly. Civil and political freedoms are now well established in Tunisia, and it is telling that in 2018 many Tunisians took to the streets to protest the Saudi crown prince Mohamed Bin Salman's visit.¹¹ Tunisia's robust civil society has been a key factor in its democratic consolidation. Conversely, Bahrain, Egypt, and Syria passed laws that severely limit associational life as a means of subverting dissent.

Gender Relations and Women's Mobilizations

The existing literature pays scant attention to women and gender issues, and certainly not as an independent variable. In contrast, we have identified gender relations and women's mobilizations prior to the Arab Spring as a key factor in shaping the direction of change in the more successful cases – namely, Morocco and Tunisia – and have shown how this variable interacts with civil society and the state to produce distinct outcomes. Women's capacity to organize, mobilize, and lead signals not only the maturation of civil society, but also women's wider extant or potential influence. The long years of feminist mobilization in Tunisia suggested both that women would play a larger role in shaping the direction of change and building new institutions, and that women's rights would be a key demand of that change and those institutions. Women's rights organizations in Morocco and Tunisia could be regarded as semi-institutionalized, that is, with centers, policy agencies, shelters, laws, and policy achievements; in Morocco after 1998, women's rights groups could legally hold large public demonstrations.¹² Tunisia and Morocco even had women leading the major business trade groups. In Tunisia, UTICA was led by Wided Bouchamaoui, who was part of the National Dialogue Quartet that helped calm the political storm in summer 2013. In Morocco, the chair of the Board of Directors of the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises was Miriem Bensalah-Chaqroun. Feminists in Morocco and Tunisia variously worked within, outside, and against the state, and often defined themselves explicitly as part of the

¹¹ According to one account, Tunisian "activists and journalists . . . displayed a banner of the crown prince holding a chain saw – a reference to Khashoggi's dismemberment." See Kareem Fahim (2018).

¹² On women's rights institutionalization, see Andrew (2010).

democratic, progressive, and modernist forces of society. Figure 7.2 illustrates the pathway to women's involvement in democratic outcomes.

In contrast, Egypt's women's organizations remained weak and fragmented, in large measure because of state restrictions on civil society organizing, but also – as Nermin Allam and Nicola Pratt have cogently explained – because women dissidents and protesters prior to 2011 emphasized nationalism rather than women's rights.¹³ In Libya and Syria, there was formal commitment to some degree of women's participation and rights, but lack of implementation and the absence of independent, prominent, and influential women's rights organizations became obstacles to the realization of those rights. In Bahrain, women's rights advocates were not permitted to challenge the ruling elite's authority or decisions, and activists were routinely harassed. And in post-1990 Yemen, underdevelopment, tribalism, and authoritarianism – along with increasing Saudi-influenced Islamization – were structural barriers to women's participation and rights. Although the draft constitution of 2015 in Yemen was intended to change the status of women, the civil war stifled meaningful institutional change. In all the countries save Tunisia and Morocco, there were numerous legal restrictions on women's autonomy and mobilizations, which undermined their economic and political agency.

International Influences and Interventions

Constructive and positive international influences do exist, and we have identified the links between civil society or social movement actors in the Arab Spring countries with (nonviolent) transnational advocacy or activist groups, such as trade unions, feminist networks, human rights organizations, and various social media networks. Such non-state transnational connections were especially useful to activists in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. Transnational advocacy groups and networks also have played a role with respect to Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen (as they did in protesting the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq). In the USA, for example, peace and anti-militarist organizations such as Code Pink, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Peace Action (notably its largest state-based affiliate, Massachusetts Peace Action) have

¹³ Allam (2018); Pratt (2012).

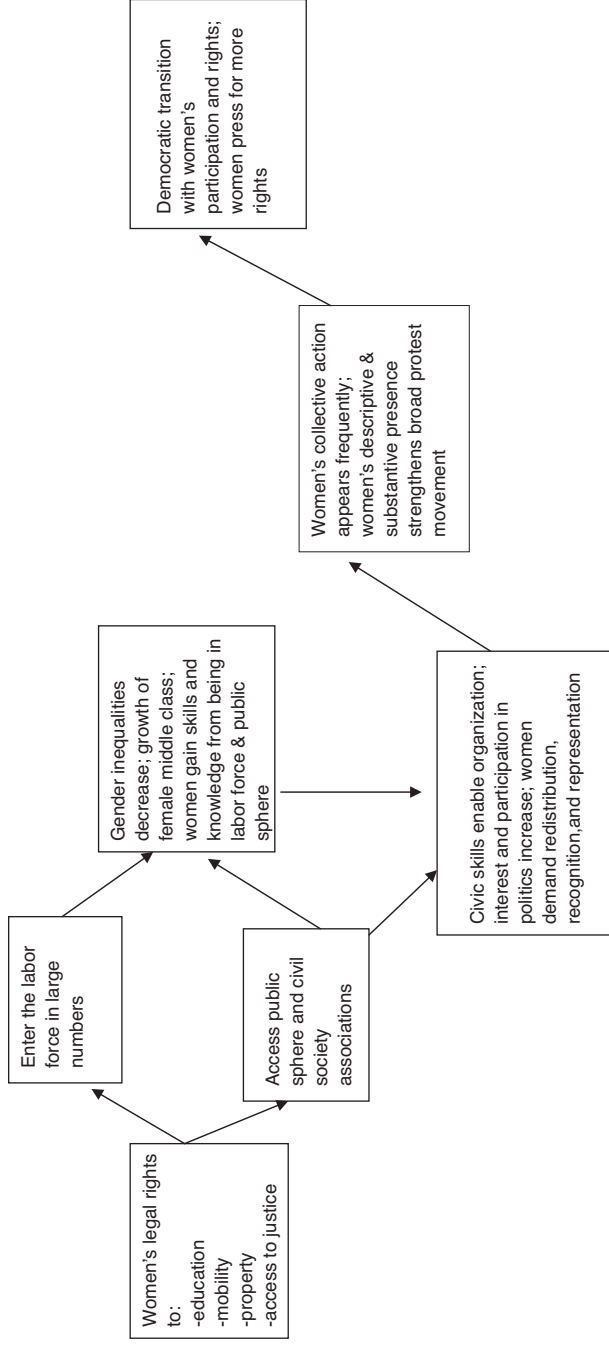


Figure 7.2 Pathways to women-friendly protest movements and democratic transitions.

lobbied politicians, protested arms manufacturers, held rallies, and organized petition drives, seminars, and webinars, especially around Yemen's plight. Our book, however, has highlighted the role of state-based international intervention, both coercive (military) and noncoercive (economic and foreign aid) in shaping the course and outcomes of the 2011 uprisings, with the presence or absence of external military intervention as a key explanatory factor for the divergent outcomes.

After the 2011 uprisings, all the cases examined herein saw increases in forms of international intervention. Among the noncoercive cases, Morocco and Tunisia received economic and foreign aid allocations particularly from the European Union. Egypt since 1978 had been a major beneficiary of US aid commitments; these increased slightly after 2011 but then declined somewhat in 2014 due to the Obama administration's decision to rescind aid following the 2013 coup. Subsequently, Egypt maintained the same pre-2011 levels following the resumption of American aid commitments by the Obama and Trump administrations. The countries that saw direct military intervention were Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. In Bahrain, the al-Khalifa monarchy requested and received Saudi-led military intervention, which succeeded in suppressing the prodemocracy uprising. This move was not condemned by the USA, as Bahrain is considered a geostrategic ally and hosts the US Fifth Fleet. As Figure 6.2 showed, Libya and Syria had limited external intervention in 2010–11 but experienced a marked increase in 2012 and afterwards, resulting in a failed state in Libya and a long internationalized civil conflict in Syria. Yemen ranked high even prior to 2011, given its role in the “War on Terror” after 9/11 and its strategic relevance for regional and Western powers to contain al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula; even so, the degree of intervention rose with the 2015 Saudi-led intervention.

As we have noted, the history of MENA is a history of external intervention, and this history has been documented in numerous studies. Interventions and impositions have ranged from colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism, and structural adjustment policies to blatant forms of state destabilization and foreign-imposed regime change through direct invasions. The presence or absence of external military intervention, whether in the form of a military invasion (e.g., Iraq in 2003, Bahrain and Libya 2011, Yemen 2015) or military and diplomatic support for rebels (Syria, Yemen, and Libya since 2011) interacts with the other variables we have identified, though almost always in

destructive ways. In Bahrain, the monarchy's reliance on external support from neighboring Gulf countries curtailed any tangible calls for reform and political inclusion by the country's majority Shi'a population. International intervention in Libya created a security vacuum that quelled any hopes of democratic transition as the country spiraled into chaos. Syria descended into a protracted civil war, fueled by a growing tide of Islamist extremism, with millions either internally displaced or seeking refuge in neighboring countries and Europe. Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco were spared external military intervention, although Egypt's own military, armed by the USA, played a role in changing the direction of political change. Tunisia embarked relatively smoothly on the course of democratic transition, although security concerns in a troubled "neighborhood," along with economic problems afflict governance and citizens alike. Tunisia had to contend with the spillover effects from the Libyan civil conflict, refugees seeking to storm the border crossing into Tunisia (as occurred in August 2014), two terrorist attacks in 2013, and thousands of young Tunisian men leaving to fight with ISIS in Syria or Iraq. Unsurprisingly, military spending has increased.

In sum, external military intervention in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen enabled the suppression of the prodemocracy movement in Bahrain, state breakdown and proliferation of armed militia in Libya, and a prolonged civil conflict in Syria and Yemen. We agree with scholars who have argued that although state violence was a necessary but not sufficient cause of the turn to violent revolt in Syria and Libya, regional and international intervention played an important part.¹⁴ What our analysis adds is that the absence of a modern civil society and significant women's participation and rights help explain the turn to violence there and in Bahrain and Yemen.

Democratization: Change and Stagnation

Economic difficulties often trigger political challenges that then lead to protests and political change, and at times a democratic transition, but the role and influence of institutions (e.g., military, political parties, social movements, civil society) vary across cases.¹⁵ Civil society mobilization as well as elite bargains were present across the third-wave

¹⁴ Tripp (2013). ¹⁵ Ghafar and Hess (2018).

democratic transitions discussed in Chapter 2, but among Arab countries these were found primarily in Tunisia. We have seen that moderation, radicalization, and backsliding can occur. Moreover, democratization is always a gendered process. It affects women and men differently, and outcomes for women's participation and rights vary. Policies for gender equality do not seem to follow a predictable pathway; contestations between and among religious forces, state agencies, political parties, and civil society actors play a determinant role in each case. However, both the literature and historical record show that where gender relations have shifted in a less patriarchal direction, and where feminist movements and organizations are strong, democratic transitions can proceed more smoothly and effectively. If a democratic consolidation requires a strong civil society, the presence of active, vocal, and visible feminist organizations that help to constitute both civil society and a vibrant public sphere will play a key role in democratization. As such, a successful and enduring democratization will depend not just on the numerical measure of women in parliamentary representation, but on the presence of women's rights organizations – as key players in civil society – and their role in agenda-setting. The relatively long history of feminist activism in Tunisia, especially on the part of ATFD and AFTURD, enabled them to challenge Islamist attempts to set back and block women's gains. They worked in coalition with secular partners in civil society and political society to defeat attempts to codify Sharia law and remove constitutional references to the equality of women and men. This is the singular achievement of the Tunisian feminist movement and its contribution to democratization.

The historical record reveals at least two paths toward democratic transition and consolidation: the protracted path (e.g., Portugal, Latin America, South Korea) and the rapid path (e.g., Central and Eastern Europe). Thomas Carothers has offered a cogent critique of the transition literature,¹⁶ but we feel that an examination of third-wave transitions deepens understanding of the possibilities available to Tunisian democrats as well as the constraints they have faced in what has been a very different global environment. Even the arguments around Tunisia's Truth and Dignity Commission (TDC) are not unique, as truth commissions almost always have been contentious and, in some cases, delayed for years. For example, truth commissions were set up

¹⁶ Carothers (2002).

quickly in Argentina, Chile, and South Africa but elsewhere did not come about until long after the democratic transition (South Korea 2005 and the Philippines 2010). Morocco's truth commission took place between 2004 and 2005, that is before the Arab Spring uprisings and during its gradualist path to democratization. Tunisia's truth commission was launched in June 2014 and issued its final report in March 2019. It shows its commitment to truth and accountability but was dogged by charges of bias and lack of historical perspective for certain events. What comes across most clearly in the TDC is the country's record of civic and judicial institutional development, the determination of many such entities to assert independence from political influence or control, and the difficulties that CSOs and activists faced during episodes of severe repression. Among other findings, the TDC shows, for example, that the Tunisian Left was the target of attacks and smear campaigns first by the Bourguiba government and then by Islamists.¹⁷ But, as TDC Council president Sihem Bensedrine writes in her preface, the message is not so much about the past as about "...construction and planning for the future [...] a democratic system that contributes to the consecration of the human rights system with all of its legal, humanitarian and social dimensions."

Not so elsewhere. Hopes and expectations notwithstanding, Egypt's democratic transition began in an unpromising way. The sequencing of events after Mubarak stepped down on February 11, 2011 was too condensed. Apart from the ascendancy of the MB and the Salafist Nour party, the new parliament was dissolved on June 14, just two days before the second round of the presidential election. This left only the MB, other Islamist groups, and the military prepared, as they had strong apparatuses and huge financial resources. Moushira Khattab, an early critic of Egypt's new democracy, argued that the MB in power "failed to see that the revolution was all about the economy, job creation, and poverty alleviation," and that "parliament ignored the fact that poor quality education lies at the core of reform of education." The MB "prioritized decriminalizing FGM, abolishing women's rights, and banning toys they deem offensive over the more pressing social and economic reforms or the worsening security situation. They have consistently shown an unprofessional and narrow-minded approach."¹⁸

¹⁷ See, e.g., pp. 310–23 in the TDC (2019) Executive Summary Report (May).

¹⁸ Khattab (2012): 7.

Nathan Brown, too, has criticized the sequencing of Egypt's post-Mubarak political evolution, noting the multiple elections and low turnouts. We agree with Eric Chaney, whose historical overview of power in "Arab Conquest" countries shows that those Arab Spring countries where political power was highly concentrated in military or religious domains would be less likely to move toward democratization.¹⁹ Tunisia and Morocco were countries with less concentration in military or religious domains. In Morocco, however, the regime's constitutional concessions fractured the protest movement as established CSOs acquiesced to the regime's modest reforms. In Tunisia, the uprising succeeded in ousting Ben Ali, limiting the power of members of his inner circle who sought to capture the transition, and the army retreated to the barracks in support of the protesters. Civil society was robust and feminist organizations vigilant. In these and other ways, Tunisia's pathway to democratization was secure.

The revolts in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen became more violent and experienced more aggressive forms of intervention almost immediately following the outbreak of unrest. In Bahrain, the Saudi-led intervention and American support through its military alliance with Bahrain shielded the al-Khalifa monarchy from domestic pressures, and the protests were ruthlessly repressed. The Syrian regime similarly used repression against protesters, albeit without foreign military aid. Libya's historically weak institutions and tribal and regional divisions, which had been sustained only by Qaddafi's patronage networks supported by vast oil reserves, resulted in a highly fractionalized transition process after his murder. Regional and international meddling fractured whatever semblance of a state had existed, producing regionalized centers of power supported by external actors and forces seeking to carve distinct spheres of influence in the country. Likewise, foreign meddling in the Syrian uprising and the regime's ruthless response to the first wave of protesters ignited an internationalized civil war. The Syrian state's survival to date is an outcome of support from its most powerful external ally, Russia, the continued loyalty of the military, and the fractionalization and radicalization of the opposition that made ordinary Syrians reluctant to fully embrace the armed revolt.

¹⁹ Brown (2013); Chaney (2012): 393.

The protest movement in Yemen led to Saleh's departure but failed to produce meaningful change in leadership given that rule was transferred to his deputy, Hadi, which bolstered discontent. The Saudi-led intervention in 2015, Western support for the coalition, and Iran's backing of the Houthi rebels produced an internationalized civil war, as had occurred in Libya and Syria. Yemen's trajectory has been the most devastating given its underdevelopment prior to the uprisings as the region's poorest country. Helen Lackner's sober perspective shows that on the eve of the 2011 uprising, "people's living standards continued to deteriorate; the patronage and nepotism-based autocratic rule had run out of steam (and cash); and rapid population growth combined with mismanagement of limited natural resources, water in particular, threatened the country's very survival." She demonstrates that the North as well as the South had been neglected and discriminated against, leading to the emergence of both the Houthis and the southern secessionists. Lackner thus concludes that "reaching a sustainable peace will only be possible if all the problems are addressed in synergy."²⁰

MENA democracy movements took place in the context of the global economic crisis, which itself was a consequence of neoliberal economic policies on a world scale. In the 1990s, MENA countries joined the rest of the world in the move away from a statist economic strategy, in which large public sectors held sway, toward one that prioritized denationalization, privatization, the adoption of "flexible" labor markets, and recruitment of foreign direct investment. In many MENA countries, oil wealth helped to attenuate some of the adverse effects of this policy shift, and governments continued to provide citizens with cheap oil (for heating, cooking, and transportation) as well as other subsidies. Even so, unemployment kept rising, making the region's double-digit unemployment rates – especially among youth and educated young women – possibly the highest in the world and the subject of many academic and policy studies. In more recent years, various social policy "reforms" were enacted, in line with neoliberal prescriptions, such as the withdrawal of state subsidies for food, public utilities, and social services. Then came the financial meltdown of 2008 and ensuing global economic crisis, which saw rising food prices in MENA countries. Egypt experienced strikes and street protests over

²⁰ Lackner (2017): 287.

rising prices, but elsewhere in the region, the combination of high unemployment, high costs of living, and authoritarian rule heightened popular dissatisfaction. In such a contest, the 2011 Arab uprisings were not so much surprising as inevitable.

A decade after the uprisings, progress in the way of democratic consolidation, the expansion of civil liberties, and economic prosperity has been limited and slow. In 2011, Morocco's monarchy wisely chose the path of compromise and constitutional reform, but in 2019–20 the persistence of socioeconomic difficulties generated renewed dissatisfaction and citizen demonstrations for policy change. As Karshenas et al. have argued, citizens during the Arab Spring protests essentially demanded democratic development, or democracy accompanied by socioeconomic rights.²¹ The analysis of Arab Barometer data by Amaney Jamal and Lina Khatib shows that in countries such as Algeria, Jordan, and Palestine, the publics regard democracy as entailing both political accountability and economic improvement.²² Similarly, analysis of data from Wave 7 of the World Values Survey – carried out in seven MENA countries (including Egypt and Tunisia) – confirms the importance to citizens of democracy as a political system but also the importance of distributive policies.²³ The absence or weakness of both triggered the 2011 Arab uprisings – and arguably the 2019–20 wave of protests as well. If citizens associate democracy with robust social and economic rights, as well as civil and political rights, then continued economic stagnation could dampen support for democratic alternatives unless new social contracts and better economic conditions emerge.

The late historian Eric Hobsbawm correctly noted that the conditions for effective democratic governance are rare: an existing state enjoying legitimacy, consent, and the ability to mediate conflicts between domestic groups.²⁴ This is difficult to achieve, especially during times of untoward economic conditions (e.g., unemployment, deficits, inflation, youth unemployment and underemployment, wage stagnation, income inequality), which could lead to either political paralysis and dysfunction or the kind of right-wing populism that we have observed in Europe, the USA, and several Global South countries

²¹ Karshenas et al. (2014). ²² Jamal and Khatib (2014).

²³ Ibid.: 248; authors' analysis of WVS Q238 and Q241.

²⁴ Hobsbawm (2005).

since at least 2015. We agree with Hobsbawm that democratization is a prolonged, contested, and turbulent process requiring considerable human, economic, and political resources to sustain. It is not an end point but rather an enduring project maintained by ongoing political contestation and negotiation. The enduring legacy of the 2011 Arab uprisings is that democratization is entirely possible in the MENA region but that entrenched structural and institutional obstacles at domestic, regional, and international levels need to be acknowledged, criticized, and overcome.

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